

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for General Kenneth S. Wilsbach, USAF
Nominee for Appointment to be Chief of Staff of the Air Force

Duties

Section 9033 of title 10, U.S. Code, describes the duties and functions of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

1. What is your understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force?

The roles of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) are categorized into four general areas: (1) statutory, (2) directed or delegated, (3) customary, and (4) personal priorities.

Statutory guidance dictates the CSAF will be appointed by the President for a four-year term in the grade of general. The appointee will possess significant joint experience to enable his or her role as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. CSF will maintain oversight of critical mission areas to include nuclear oversight, and acquisitions-related functions. By the nature of the position and by law, CSAF exercises supervision over members and organizations of the Air Force as directed by the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF).

Functional and delegated responsibilities include oversight (but without command authority) over all Major Commands and Direct Reporting Units. Among other responsibilities, as delegated by SecAF, CSAF may appoint officers to command positions in the Air Force, approve certain medals and awards, and approve organizational change requests for the structure of the Air Force.

Customary roles of the CSAF include general officer management, leading the force's most senior strategy sessions (Corona), convening civic leader conferences, and testifying before Congress on budget related matters.

Personal roles will nest with priorities of the Secretary of War and SecAF to best posture the Air Force for combat alongside our allies, partners, and our own government's vast sources of national power. These roles will include warfighter talks with foreign service chiefs, advisory roles in military professional development and education, and other functions as dictated by the Secretary of War and the President.

2. What background and experience, including joint duty assignments, do you possess that you believe qualify you to perform these duties?

I have had the distinct honor of calling myself an Airman and a warfighter in our United States Air Force for more than 40 years. I have humbly and proudly carried the title of

Commander nine times at echelons from the Squadron level through two Major Commands. My two most recent assignments as the Commander of Pacific Air Forces and as the Commander of Air Combat Command allowed me the opportunity to address some of our force's most significant challenges at the national level. These assignments also left me inspired by the patriotic, innovative, motivated uniformed and Civilian Airmen who make up the United States Air Force.

More than a quarter of my 40-year career thus far has been spent in joint assignments around the world. Experience flying and leading during conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan forged a foundation of expertise I carried to the Pacific as we worked hard to deter North Korean and Chinese aggression.

As a command pilot with more than 6,000 hours across six different platforms, I've also experienced first-hand what it takes to hold our adversaries at risk, capitalize on strategic opportunities, and ultimately coalesce airpower for our nation to deliver peace through strength.

3. Do you meet the joint duty requirements for this position?

I am a fully joint-qualified officer with significant experience fighting and leading as a member of the joint force.

4. Do you believe that there are any steps that you need to take to enhance your ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, particularly in regard to serving as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and assisting the Secretary of the Air Force in performing certain acquisition-related functions?

The broad scope of my career has exposed me to nearly every core mission of our Air Force. I am confident this depth and breadth of expertise would serve me well if I was confirmed as the Chief of Staff. I acknowledge, however, that I have not been exposed to every mission and function across our vast mission set. I look forward to learning more about these missions and functions alongside our talented leadership team. The opportunity to represent every Airman in every function would be the greatest honor of my career.

Furthermore, I am well in tune with the Secretary of the Air Force as he prioritizes people, readiness, and modernization. It is clear to me that our Secretary is driving ahead to ensure our force is ready to defend our nation today while also working tirelessly to develop the capabilities necessary to deter potential adversaries well into the future. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Meink to optimize and modernize our force in line with his intent.

5. If confirmed, what innovative ideas would you consider providing to the Secretary of the Air Force for enhancing the organization, training, and equipping of the Air Force?

We need to continue leveraging large scale exercises and operational readiness inspections to enhance our readiness and test new employment concepts. We also need to accelerate solutions for point defense systems to ensure protection of the homeland. Finally, to enhance our power projection abilities, we need to continue to develop the next iterations of CCA, HVAA protect, and advanced munitions.

6. What are your goals, if confirmed, for the transformation of the Air Force to meet new and emerging threats?

Homeland Defense is our top priority. At the same time, our Service needs to be able to project power into critical regions to prevent wars when possible, or to win them if and when we must. The Air Force must deliberately preserve our high-end readiness for the nation's most consequential challenges, such as that posed by China in the Western Pacific. We must deliver warfighting advantages through both 'stand-in' and 'stand-off' capabilities, while increasing the tempo of our capability development to reestablish deterrence. Finally, we must advance our efforts in the areas of Long-Range Kill Chains, countering adversary long-range kill chains, and Air Base Air Defense.

7. What is your vision for the Air Force's future force design?

My overarching goal for the transformation of the Air Force would be to ensure we remain the most lethal and adaptable air force in the world, capable of deterring aggression and winning in any conflict. This requires a carefully balanced approach, simultaneously maintaining the readiness of our current force while aggressively pursuing the modernization needed to stay ahead of emerging threats. In some areas of transformation we are further along than others. For instance, with respect to HVAA, logistics, tankers, and broader deterrence, there remains work to be done.

In addition to the duties enumerated in Section 9033, it provides that the Chief of Staff shall perform such other military duties as are assigned to him by the President, the Secretary of War, or the Secretary of the Air Force.

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8. In light of the lines of effort set forth in the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG), what other military duties do you anticipate the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of the Air Force would assign to you, if confirmed?

I anticipate that the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Air Force would expect me to maintain a lethal and ready force and focus on three key areas: ensuring the safety and security of our nation and its borders, that the Air Force creates the most lethal options to support and defend American interests abroad through power projection, and continuing to lead nuclear modernization efforts across the Department.

9. If confirmed, what duties and responsibilities would you assign to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force?

If I am confirmed, I will request the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force (VCSAF) focus primarily on those functions and processes that keep the mechanics of our force working smoothly. VCSAF will facilitate and guide vital budget processes, working with the Air Staff and our Major Commands to frame decisions I will ultimately make regarding allocated and prioritized investments. VCSAF will guide personnel programs in line with my stated priorities to ensure our Airmen are trained, equipped, and prepared to meet our national security objectives. The VCSAF keeps the engine turning by propelling vision into action in line with the President, the Secretary of War, and our Department of the Air Force priorities.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff

Section 921 of the FY17 NDAA made changes to section 151 of title 10, U. S. Code, concerning the service of members of the Joint Chiefs (other than the Chairman) as military advisors to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

10. What is your assessment of the authorities of, and process by which members of the Joint Chiefs (other than the Chairman) provide military advice and opinions to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and civilian leadership of the Department of War (DOW)?

At this point, I am not in a position to make a thorough assessment. As the Air Combat Command Commander, I have supported the previous CSAF and VCSAF in their execution of these responsibilities, and have found the authorities sufficient for providing advice. If confirmed, I will be in a position to assess the sufficiency of the authorities and process for providing military advice and opinions to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of War.

11. If confirmed, would you commit to provide your best military advice to the President, National Security Council, Homeland Security Council, and civilian leadership of the Department of War, even when your advice and opinions might differ from those of the Chairman or the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Yes

Use of Military Force

12. In your view, what factors should be considered in making recommendations to the President on the use of military force?

In my view, a recommendation to the President on the proper use of military force is a solemn undertaking that must prioritize the advancement of U.S. national security objectives while remaining grounded in U.S. law and policy, as well as applicable international law. Advice on the use of military force must weigh the potential risk to U.S. forces and our allies and partners against strategic risk and likelihood of success. In any recommendation, the end state must be considered.

Major Challenges and Priorities

13. What is your vision for the Air Force of today? For the Air Force of the future?

We are a ready Air Force, projecting strength and providing deterrence to our adversaries, capable of winning our nation's wars. My vision for the future is an Air Force capable of defeating our adversaries wherever they may be. We must be the force that shapes the battlespace, not simply reacting to it.

14. What is your vision for how the Air Force and the Space Force should work with each other?

We should be extremely close in planning and operations, similar to the Navy and Marine Corps.

15. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you will face if confirmed to be the Chief of Staff of the Air Force?

The need to balance the necessary modernizations to confront a rapidly changing threat of the future, while also increasing our readiness for the fight today.

15a. What plans do you have for addressing each of these challenges, if confirmed?

We owe our Airmen a modernized and ready force. The biggest threat to those two things are fiscal constraints and fielding the US Air Force the Nation needs to confront the rapidly advancing threats; the associated risk we will incur with some of our foundational underpinnings of the force (infrastructure, IT, sustaining old weapons systems, obsolete training tools); retaining talent.

16. Given the major challenges you identified above, what other priorities would you set for your term as Chief of Staff of the Air Force, if confirmed?

The AF will continue to focus our readiness, exercises and training on the key components required to sharpen our warrior ethos to meet INDS guidance.

- Readiness - Restoring full-spectrum readiness by balancing near-term operational capability with long-term modernization investment.
- Capabilities - Ensure that our platforms enable agility, survivability, and integration with joint and allied forces.

- Training - Within 24 months, I would aim to improve training realism, equipment availability, and personnel qualifications to meet peer adversary threats. Our competitors have long studied the way we fight and are fielding systems intended to deny U.S. control of the skies above a warzone, which in turn threatens our Airmen, as well as our Joint Force partners and allies across multiple domains.
- Standards - A focus on the standards that unite our force and drives culture.
- Warrior Ethos - Enhance the ideology of air power built off our shared culture.

Air superiority is not a given; it must be achieved and sustained by modern capabilities operated by our Airmen. To maintain this advantage, the Air Force must continue to invest in technologically superior systems, fielded at a pace and scale to deter our competitors. We are applying streamlined acquisition methods to ensure integration across platforms, commonality where possible, and greater lethality. At the same time, we must divest aircraft beyond their cost-effective service life, upgrade viable fleets, and procure modern platforms to outpace peer threats.

Equally critical, we must strengthen readiness, improving aircraft availability, training, and support for our Airmen, so they can execute missions today while preparing for tomorrow's fight. Sustaining this balance ensures the Air Force maintains the military advantage required to defend the Homeland and deter aggression, particularly from China, with the support of allies and partners well into the future.

Civilian Control of the Military

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

Civilian control of the military is engrained in our history and culture. If confirmed, I will continue to serve in a manner befitting the goals, ideals, and mandates of our Constitution and federal laws — one of the most important being the principle of civilian control of the Armed Forces. As I serve under the elected civilian leadership to further our national security interests, I will be thoughtful and candid with my advice and feedback. Furthermore, I will commit to providing all relevant information at my disposal to aid in the Commander in Chief's decision-making.

18. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to ensure that the Secretary of War and the Under Secretary of War for Policy are fully engaged in preparing guidance for and reviewing contingency plans?

If confirmed, I will work with my fellow Joint Chiefs and the Chairman to ensure transparency in military planning and routine engagements with the Secretary of War. Stove-piped planning is not effective, and the military arm is but one piece of the national arsenal for diplomacy. Civilian leadership, to include priorities and planning guidance, is critical for the best military advice to be provided on how to employ or integrate the

USAF and our capabilities. Risk, and risk mitigation, will always be the centerpiece of any conversation with political leadership to ensure service-level plans are nested within and support civilian leadership policy decisions.

If confirmed, I would help OSW develop guidance/plans by ensuring these guidance/plans are reflected in wargaming, concepts, and are a reflection of real-world scenarios which are shaping the development and production of the capabilities we need to win today and into the future. We will continue to participate in strategic guidance and plan development with OSW to prepare guidance and contingency plans for the Secretary of War and Undersecretary of War for Policy decision.

19. 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?

Effective civilian control of the military requires a functional relationship between the elected civilian leadership and the military, who carry out the orders, direction, and guidance of the civilian leadership. This is established through candid advice from the military, thoughtful deliberation by the civilian decision-makers, and executable, lawful direction to the military for execution. The Congress plays a key role by leveraging the information and recommendations of military leadership to develop legislation to resource the military, as well as provide the authorization and parameters for the execution of the resources, and by providing advice and consent to the President's proposed military leadership.

20. 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?

As a military officer, my responsibility to support and defend the Constitution includes executing policy and guidance directed by our civilian leadership. While I have the obligation to provide military advice to inform civilian leadership of the opportunities and risks associated with the U.S. military executing policy, the political elements of those decisions are not within the purview of my advice. Once decisions are made by civilian leadership, I have a duty to faithfully execute those lawful decisions.

21. In your view, what is the appropriate role for the Department when supporting law enforcement in state or national emergencies?

The DAF should be prepared to provide support to Civil Authorities, including civilian law enforcement, consistent with the law governing DoW involvement in civilian law enforcement activities. The DAF should also consider military readiness requirements necessary to execute the National Defense Strategies.

If confirmed as Chief of Staff of the Air Force, you will testify regularly before Congress,

and may be asked to comment on partisan political matters.

- 22. 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?**

Remaining apolitical is a fundamental responsibility to ensure credibility as a military professional in supporting and defending the Constitution. If confirmed, my advice will be based on my best military judgment and experience with respect to risks and opportunities to fulfill my obligation as the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. These risks and opportunities will be based on the principles of my profession, and not political or ideological positions or perspectives.

National Defense Strategy and Interim National Security Strategic Guidance

The Department of War published Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) on March 13, 2025. The INDSG supersedes the Biden Administration's 2022 National Defense Strategy. The INDSG prioritizes defense of the homeland and deterrence of China over all other threats.

- 23. Do you believe that the 2025 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance accurately assesses the current strategic environment, including the most critical and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies?**

Yes, including the most critical and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies. The clarity of the INDSG will, if confirmed, inform the way I pursue Air Force priorities.

- 24. In your view, does the 2025 INDSG correctly specify the priority missions of the DOW and the capabilities by which DOW can achieve its objectives in the context of the current strategic environment? What do you perceive as the areas of greatest risk?**

Yes. It provides clear direction to establish a competitive stance against our adversaries, emphasizes the need to maintain credible deterrence, and ensures homeland defense. The DoW's greatest risk is deterring Chinese aggression and preparing for a potential conflict. It must accelerate the modernization of its aging fleet and ensure high levels of readiness. Our greatest risk is the time it takes to develop and field new capabilities, we must move more quickly than we have been.

- 25. In your view, is the Air Force adequately sized, structured, and resourced to implement the 2025 INDSG and the associated operational plans? Please explain your answer.**

Not yet. The Air Force is tasked in excess of the capacity we have for the commitments

around the globe. Any future war will be won by and through the air domain.

26. If confirmed, how would you address any gaps or shortfalls in the ability of the Air Force to meet the demands placed on it by the 2025 INDSG and the operational plans that implement the strategy?

Significant work has already been done in developing concepts and capabilities, as well as making investments, to meet the demands of our national strategy. If confirmed, I will work to continue programs to recapitalize the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force as well as the bomber leg of the nuclear triad. We will continue ongoing measures to keeping our nation secure through our intelligence and other air operations in support of NORTHCOM's efforts in the Southwest Border. We will strengthen our missile defense through Golden Dome for America. My efforts will regularly engage other Services, agencies, and partner nations to collectively enhance our strength through burden sharing as we aggressively collaborate on our efforts to strengthen our alliances and to achieve common objectives.

27. If confirmed, what changes or adjustments would you advise the Secretary of the Air Force to make in the Air Force's implementation of the 2025 INDSG and forthcoming NDS?

We must shorten the time from concept to capability delivery. To do so, we need to align our requirements process with the 2025 INDSG LOE 4 by prioritizing early and continuous collaboration across the Department of the Air Force and with industry, enabling them to rapidly develop relevant solutions by aligning their efforts with our prioritized needs. We need to establish flexible pathways for developing and validating operational needs and capability attributes, alongside a concept refinement pathway incorporating studies, analysis, industry engagement, prototyping and experimentation.

28. Does the Air Force have the requisite analytic capabilities and tools to support you, if confirmed as the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, in developing and implementing the force structure, sizing, and shaping plans required to position the Air Force to execute the operational plans associated with the 2025 INDSG and forthcoming NDS? Please explain your answer.

Yes, the Air Force analytic community has demonstrated tremendous resourcefulness in assessing our force structure, size, and capabilities to align with the objectives of the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) and the upcoming National Defense Strategy (NDS). Looking ahead, to maintain our strategic advantage in the face of rapid changes in the character of warfare, we must significantly invest in the future of our analytic capabilities. The Air Force is leading a joint effort to implement Advanced Wargaming, a transformative initiative that will integrate models from across the Department of War and the Intelligence Community. This effort will augment human decision-making with artificial intelligence and provide our warfighters with access to high-powered computing resources.

While we are confident in our ability to win today, securing victory in the future requires a commitment to providing decision-quality data at speed and scale. Investing in our analytic future is an investment in our national security.

Overall Readiness of the Air Force

29. How would you assess the current readiness of the Air Force—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—to execute the NDS and associated operational plans?

The Air Force successfully executes its current operational campaigns in support of National Security objectives. However, our ability to generate forces has declined significantly in the past five years. Aging platforms, supply chain delays, and inflationary pressures have severely hampered our efforts to improve aircraft availability and to train combat-ready aircrew for the pacing threat.

- While personnel and training have improved slightly over the past 5 years, we are observing delays in supply and equipment recovery.
 - Factors such as contract delays, requirement changes, natural disasters, and emerging contingency operations complicate equipment and supply health and can erode weapon system sustainment (WSS) funding gains each year.
 - Aircraft availability is a key component to recovery of readiness and can be improved through a healthy inventory of parts for consumables and repairs
- We need to strike a better balance between sustainment and modernization for near-term readiness.
- Training infrastructure is improving through initiatives like the Joint Simulation Environment (JSE) and training spaces such as the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex (JPARC) and Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR), however challenges remain in sustainment and equipment availability.
- The Air Force is deliberately managing readiness to restore full-spectrum capability through sustained modernization.
 - Shifting our focus from the last two decades of uncontested operations to future combat operations against a pacing threat requires time, money, and training to realign our force.
 - This process will include divesting/replacing aging, costly, legacy platforms that are ill-suited for contested environments; modernizing our current fleet where feasible; and developing a new generation of capabilities that will enhance our likelihood of success in the future

30. In your view, what are the priority missions for which *current and future* Air Force forces should be trained and ready in the context of day-to-day activities, as well as for contingencies?

The future Air Force must be able to integrate our core functions; Air Superiority, Rapid Global Mobility, Precision Global Strike, Command and Control, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) into effective missions in support of the Joint Force. Our priority function is control of the air, which enables the entire Joint Force to deliver all other functions and missions. Without sufficient control of the air, we are back to attritional warfare, as we are sadly seeing today in Ukraine. The Air Force is essential for winning tomorrow's fight, and we must transform how we deliver air power in order to meet the threat and win.

This is the Air Force's enduring role. How we execute that role changes over time. Future efforts will prioritize capabilities that enable agility, survivability, and integration with joint and allied forces.

31. In what specific ways has the Air Force improved or not improved its state of readiness across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training?

The Air Force's readiness (capability and capacity) is hampered by under-investment in foundational accounts and the impacts of inflation on the buying power. We continue to evaluate, manage, and when appropriate, accept risk in near-term operational readiness across multiple platforms as the Air Force invests in modernization.

Training has benefited from immersive technologies and synthetic environments, though live-fly limitations persist.

Equipment readiness is challenged by sustainment costs, aging fleets, and supply chain volatility despite increased investment in Weapon Systems Sustainment.

Overall, readiness gains are uneven and require continued focus on foundational accounts and modernization to meet strategic demands.

The Air Force has improved personnel readiness through targeted retention bonuses, expanded recruiting efforts, and increased simulator instructor capacity (original approved). Over the last 20 years, deliberate choices were made to balance immediate readiness with future modernization, including personnel cuts to invest in future capabilities. Since FY23, the Air Force has closed the gap between authorized end-strength and inventory, nearly achieving its FY25 authorized end-strength of 320,000 for the first time since FY21 (A1M). Training has benefited from immersive technologies and synthetic environments, though live-fly limitations persist. Additionally, the Air Force has begun reviewing common military training to reduce frequency, consolidate, or eliminate redundancies, creating more opportunities for readiness-focused training and education (A1D). Equipment readiness remains challenged by sustainment costs, aging fleets, and supply chain volatility, despite increased investment in Weapon System Sustainment to improve fleet availability and mission capability rates. Overall, readiness gains are uneven and require continued focus on foundational accounts, modernization, and strategic investments to meet strategic demands.

32. If confirmed, what would you do to restore full spectrum Air Force readiness, and under what timelines?

If confirmed, I would prioritize restoring full-spectrum readiness by balancing near-term operational capability with long-term modernization. Within 24 months, I would aim to improve training realism, equipment availability, and personnel proficiency to meet peer adversary threats. We will use holistic, data-driven analysis and wargaming to inform our Service investment strategies and to improve our readiness so we can better align with the administration's priorities.

33. In your view, what is the biggest challenge to Air Force readiness today? How will you address that challenge, if confirmed?

The biggest challenge to Air Force readiness is the tension between sustaining legacy systems and investing in future capabilities under constrained budgets. This imbalance risks hollowing the force and delaying transformation needed to meet pacing threats. If confirmed, I would address this by making hard divestment decisions and advocating for stable funding to support modernization and readiness simultaneously.

Budget

34. If confirmed, by what standards would you measure the adequacy of the Air Force budget?

If confirmed, I would measure the adequacy of Air Force budget by its ability to contribute to defense of the U.S. homeland, deterring our adversaries, and building enduring advantages in accordance with administration priorities.

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

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

The UPL provides Congress with transparency on areas where additional resources could improve capability or accelerate programs, beyond what could be accommodated in the President's Budget. All the services, including the Air Force, must make difficult funding decisions that balance manpower, modernization, and readiness capabilities to provide a competitive edge. If confirmed, I will follow the law as passed by Congress.

36. If confirmed, do you agree to provide your unfunded priorities list to Congress in a timely manner?

If confirmed, I will comply fully with the statutory requirement in Section 222a of title 10, U.S. Code, and ensure the Air Force's Unfunded Priorities List is submitted to Congress in a timely manner.

Alliances and Partnerships

37. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to strengthen existing U.S. alliances and partnerships, build new partnerships, and leverage opportunities for international cooperation to advance U.S. security interests?

The United States Air Force's relationships with our Allies and Partners are vital to America's national security. If confirmed, I will continue the Air Force's long-established efforts to develop and maintain strong partnerships across the globe. Using the Air Force's robust security cooperation enterprise, including foreign military sales, international armaments cooperation, and engagement with my fellow air chiefs, I will ensure we are working with our Allies and Partners to facilitate greater burden-sharing and deter aggression around the world.

The Air Force maintains enduring, trusted relationships with international air chiefs. Through a robust tempo of engagement that includes office calls, counterpart visits, regional conferences, and combined forums, these relationships foster open communication, strengthen mutual understanding, and improve coordination at the highest levels. Regular and deliberate interaction among air chiefs enables candid dialogue on shared challenges and enhances the alignment of plans, capabilities, and training priorities. These engagements also reinforce the foundation of personal trust and professional respect that underpin effective partnerships and make them more resilient in the face of emerging threats.

As Pacific Air Forces Commander, I was fortunate to hold the trust of our previous CSAFs in representing them to our allied and partner air chiefs in the day-to-day engagements and relationship-keeping with not only every Indo-Pacific partner, but also global partners with deep and resounding interests in the Indo-Pacific, to include European and South and Latin American Air Forces. Through my efforts, and those of my fellow service component commanders, I have a deep appreciation for the importance of leveraging opportunities for international cooperation to advance our security interests and defend the homeland.

Our most significant advantage over our competitors is our ability to operate alongside our Allies and Partners. If confirmed, I will continue to invest in the strong relationships we share with global air chiefs while advancing the development of programs that increase the lethality, interoperability, and readiness of our international partners.

38. What are the major challenges for strengthening existing alliances and partnerships or building new ones, including for improving interoperability and shared

operational concepts? What steps would you recommend, if confirmed, for overcoming these challenges?

Mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships are an enduring U.S. strength and are critical to achieving our objectives. The Department of the Air Force seeks to strengthen international relationships and work with our partners to build shared air and space capabilities and capacity. This cooperative endeavor is not without challenges.

Differences in strategic priorities between the U.S. and allies and partners can lead to unrealized expectations and diminished cooperation. To mitigate these differences, we must increase service-to-service level engagement to focus on common operational needs and expand bilateral defense exchanges in research and technology. Additionally clarifying expectations regarding approaches, priorities, and government vs. industry roles early in collaborative programs will also address differences in strategic priorities.

Another challenge we face when working with our allies and partners is differing views over “sensitive” information and the lack of technical collaborative infrastructure to share information. To address this critical issue the Department should implement policies to facilitate more accessible information sharing with allies and partners, while preserving appropriately classified information. At the same time, we must address technological barriers to information sharing and work towards developing a secure collaborative infrastructure between U.S. and partner cyber organizations to discuss classification issues.

To stay globally competitive, we must engage with our allies and partners early in concept and system design and remove barriers to cooperation on fast-evolving technologies. Including allies and partners in key concept development discussions and programs will ensure they are able to appropriately access advanced technologies to strengthen alliances and enable integrated deterrence.

Joint Operations

Operations are becoming increasingly joint as the Air Force and the Army 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.

- 39. Are the Services’ current roles and mission assignments appropriate in light of today’s Joint warfighting requirements? Should certain roles and missions be realigned or divested? Please explain your answer.**

The current USAF roles and missions support the joint scheme of maneuver, and we must continue to advance our ability to control the air. I believe the current roles and mission assignments of the Services have largely served us well to date. The shift towards a potential high-end conflict, as outlined in the National Defense Strategy, demands a critical and comprehensive review of all roles and mission assignments. While the missions themselves are enduring, the manner in which we provide a given effect or achieve a mission may change in the future. For instance, the way in which the Air Force establishes air superiority in the future has evolved over the years, and will continue to change into the future, but the need to perform this mission remains a constant.

40. Which other Service doctrines and capabilities offer the greatest opportunity for synergy with the Air Force in joint operations?

The Air Force drives joint synergy by integrating multi-domain kinetic and non-kinetic effects delivered through synchronized strike complexes for long-range fires. We're deeply embedded in joint command and control doctrine, aligning complementary capabilities to enable globally integrated C2 through a resilient joint mesh.

41. What innovative ideas are you considering to increase Service interoperability to accomplish missions and tasks in support of Department of War objectives in joint operations?

With the JCIDS reform now in progress, innovation will be more important to ensure interoperability in joint operations. The Air Force's relationship with industry is crucial to delivering interoperable capabilities to the warfighter as fast as possible. Continuing to support experimentation initiatives, both with investments of funds and time with warfighters for industry is critical. The Air Force will continue to collaborate with industry experts on experimentation in artificial intelligence and machine learning, providing innovative solutions to help achieve decision advantage through the optimal balance of human-machine teaming. Finally, high-end virtual training using the Joint Simulation Environment, joint and combined wargames, and service level exercises enhance our ability to accomplish airpower objectives.

The Air Force is moving to a disaggregated architecture for Air Battle Management, leaning heavily on as-of-yet unfielded space capabilities. The Navy, on the other hand, is investing heavily in the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye and P-8 Poseidon for managing operations of naval forces.

42. What is your understanding of why the Air Force and the Navy are pursuing different strategies?

While both the Air Force and Navy align with the CJADC2 vision, their distinct operational priorities drive differing strategies. The Air Force invests in space-based capabilities, beyond line-of-sight communications, scalable moving target engagement, and disaggregated battle management nodes to ensure resilient command and control in contested environments, prioritizing global power projection and offensive/defensive

missions outlined in the Joint Warfighting Concept. The Navy's E-2D and P-8 acquisitions reflect its primary focus on fleet defense and maintaining maritime superiority. Despite these differences, both services contribute as nodes within the CJADC2 architecture. USAF and USN integration leverages joint operations, such as combining USAF bombers and Navy carrier strike groups for long-range strike and A2/AD mitigation through sensor sharing and synchronized attacks. The Navy relies on USAF space assets for navigation, targeting, and secure communications. Joint exercises like Resolute Force Pacific refine capabilities aligned with CJADC2.

43. What is your understanding of the Air Force's approach to airborne battle management and how do the Air Force and the Navy intend to execute joint airborne battle management in a high-end fight?

The Air Force and Navy are aligned with the Department's and Chairman's vision for Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control and battle management. The Air Force is pursuing a globally integrated, multi-layered, and multi-domain approach to provide command and control of the joint air battle. This strategy envisions a resilient and persistent C2 mesh, including a joint mix of organic and inorganic sensors. These sensors will achieve air domain awareness, and, through a disaggregated network of battle management systems, exercise distributed control through multiple communications and data pathways.

While the Navy will support the maritime component as its primary function, it will also be a key contributor providing sensing and battle management capability to the air component. With the divestment of the aging E-3 fleet, the future Air Force will be wholly reliant on joint and allied capabilities to provide airborne early warning and battle management.

Joint and allied airborne early warning and battle management systems such as the USN E-2D, RAAF E-7, and NATO E-3A are prime examples of this low density, high demand capability. This reliance on joint and allied capabilities will present challenges to the Air Force primarily due to limited resources and competing priorities. This may lead to increased operational risk due to unique capacity, endurance, and tasking limitations as well as limited opportunities for training with a small and high demand joint/allied force. Managing this risk will require the USAF to invest in modernizing air battle management, prioritizing existing resources to ensure adequate coverage of the air domain, and continuing to improve our interoperability and readiness with our joint and allied partners.

44. How is the Air Force ensuring that the air battle manager career field is sustained between retirement of the E-3 AWACS fleet and the implementation of the future Air Battle Management architecture?

- Air Battle Managers (ABMs) are currently employed at a variety of units and mission sets beyond USAF E-3 squadrons, including the NATO E-3 squadron, Control and

Reporting Centers (CRC), Air Operations Centers (AOC), and Battle Control Centers (BCC).

- These command-and-control organizations and missions will continue to expand as E-3 divestment proceeds and will require additional multi-domain battle management expertise as threats evolve and new capabilities are made available.
- Emerging requirements, such as Golden Dome for America (GDA), Air Base Air Defense (ABAD) teams, and Counter-small Unidentified Aerial Systems (C-sUAS) teams, will require Air Battle Management expertise to operate in and lead these new organizations.
- The Air Force will continue to closely manage the air battle manager career field and ensure it properly resources both current and emerging Battle Management Command and Control (BMC2) and rated manning requirements.

The Air Force is committed to sustaining the air battle manager (ABM) career field during the transition from the E-3 AWACS fleet to the future Air Battle Management architecture. Selective reenlistment and aviation bonuses are being utilized to retain talent and maintain necessary manpower levels, ensuring the Air Force's air dominance capabilities. Despite broader budgetary constraints, there are no forecasted force-shaping measures that would impact the size of the ABM career field, allowing the Air Force to safeguard this critical capability as we move toward implementing the next-generation architecture.

Acquisition

In recent National Defense Authorization Acts, Congress expanded and refined the acquisition-related functions of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

- 45. If confirmed, how would you assist the Secretary of the Air Force in the performance of certain acquisition-related functions, while ensuring compatibility with the duties and responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (as established in title 10, U.S. Code, sections 9013 and 9016)?**

If confirmed, I would work closely with the Service Acquisition Executive to prioritize functions across the Department of the Air Force.

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

- a. If confirmed, I will focus on integrating the requirement, acquisition, and budget process to allow for adaptation to respond to the threat and streamline the requirement validation process. I will ensure engagement with requirement owners occurs early and often in the process and the budget process remains flexible enough to respond to changing acquisition or evolving security environment.

- b. To deliver at the speed required to stay ahead of the threat, early collaboration between industry, operators, and acquirers is essential in determining what is operationally useful and technically feasible. By establishing key system attributes early, we can iterate on systems and concepts rapidly and move towards increasingly well-defined and stable requirements.
- c. Lastly, I will work to ensure on-going Acquisition Reform efforts deliver their intended improvements in our ability to deliver capability to the warfighter at the speed to win.

47. If confirmed, what actions would you propose, if any, to ensure that requirements are realistic, technically achievable, and prioritized?

We need to get industry, acquirers, and operators together earlier in the requirements process to understand what is operationally useful and technically feasible, while establishing key system attributes and trade space. Furthermore, these needs must be prioritized against our desired end state while maintaining existing capabilities. Using the next generation acquisition approach, in coordination with the Service Acquisition Executive, I will institutionalize the key elements from the successful Collaborative Combat Aircraft program into future acquisition programs.

48. If confirmed, what specific measures would you recommend to control “requirements creep” in the defense acquisition system?

Controlling requirements creep begins with a good understanding of our capability gaps. The better we can define those gaps, the easier we can define the key system attributes to resolve them. Using those key system attributes, we allow for earlier and faster iterative refinement of concepts and associated requirements. This approach identifies unknowns earlier, forms and refines requirements faster, and bolsters requirements stability. Finally, leveraging modular open system architectures where they make sense allows our systems to be more adaptable to operationally driven requirement changes. This approach also lowers the barrier of entry for industry and drives lower costs.

49. If confirmed, how would you utilize your authority to arrest the exponential escalation in cost that, in recent history, has marked the acquisition life-cycle of Service platforms and weapons systems?

If confirmed, I will work with Service cost estimators and CAPE to ensure program cost estimates are realistic and data informed to reduce errors and surprises in cost overruns. I will also work with the requirements process to build in flexible trade space so capability can be delivered as a minimum viable capability if necessary.

50. In your view, how should leaders be held accountable for large scale acquisition failures or cost or schedule overruns?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure on-going Acquisition Reform efforts deliver their intended improvements in our ability to deliver capability to the warfighter at the speed to win. I will work to ensure Acquisition Reform efforts are leveraged to ensure accountability mechanisms are appropriately aligned to drive program outcomes.

51. In your view, are there other roles or responsibilities in the acquisition process that should be assigned to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the other Service Chiefs, in your view?

The recent disestablishment of the Joint Capability Integration and Development System in alignment with the SecWar memo, directing Military Service Requirements as the Service's responsibility will allow the Services to be better positioned to pursue advanced technologies for the warfighter. The assignment of this role will allow the Service Chiefs to accelerate the acquisition of top needs and solutions while ensuring budgeting decisions are focused on the most critical needs.

52. How would you ensure the “process” of programs of record does not limit service investment in portfolios of capabilities or mission threads?

If confirmed, I would work with the Secretary and the Department to assess, establish, and implement an approach to align budgets to portfolios of capabilities and mission threads.

53. How would you resource enablers (like authorities to operate, data management, or test and certification) that Program Managers/Program Executive Officers see as outside of their requirements?

If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Service Acquisition Executive to ensure on-going Acquisition Reform efforts deliver their intended improvements to focus on improving all aspects of the acquisition process, including those performed by acquisition enablers. My team and I will evaluate opportunities to resource enablers to deliver cross-cutting weapons systems, at best value for the taxpayer, at the speed to win

54. How would you enable processes for the Air Force that empower acquisition professionals and reduce institutional policy barriers to enable cross service requirements development and capabilities discussions?

If confirmed, I will work to ensure on-going Acquisition Reform efforts deliver their intended improvements in our ability to reduce institutional policy barriers and enable optimal requirements development and capability delivery at scale and lower cost.

A natural tension exists between the objectives of major defense acquisition programs to reduce cost and accelerate schedule and the need to ensure performance meets requirements and specifications—the objective of the test and evaluation function.

55. Has the Secretary of the Air Force assigned to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force responsibility for those aspects of the function of research and development relating to test and evaluation for Air Force acquisition programs? If so, how would you exercise this responsibility, if confirmed?

Yes, SecAF has assigned CSAF aspects of the function of R&D relating to test and evaluation for service Acquisition Programs. If confirmed, I would continue to engage with the Air Force Test community through AF/TE, Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Command (AFOTEC), and Air Force Test Center (AFTC), while coordinating efforts with OSW test and evaluation (T&E) organizations.

56. What is your assessment of the appropriate balance between the desire to reduce acquisition cycle times and the need to perform adequate test and evaluation?

Test and evaluation is a critical component to the acquisition lifecycle that ensures our warfighters are given safe and effective weapon systems. Inclusion of test and evaluation processes at the onset of an acquisition program along with milestone decisions informed by critical test and evaluation information will ensure a balance between reduced acquisition cycle times and adequate test and evaluation. If confirmed, I will continue to aggressively pursue avenues to leverage technology in this space while preserving the criteria for adequate test and evaluation.

When you ask about an appropriate balance, what we are really asking is how do we determine what risks we are willing to take across the test spectrum of risk (technical, safety, suitability, effectiveness). This must be clearly identified program by program and each program executive officer must be supported and entrusted to manage that risk to produce capabilities. If confirmed, I will aggressively pursue a risk management framework that balances this risk to meet the needs of today's environment.

57. Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe it appropriate to procure weapon systems and equipment that have not been demonstrated through test and evaluation to be operationally effective, and operationally suitable?

I believe in today's environment, when there are real and clear threats to our nation, we should be exploring all pathways to onboard capability. Executing effective test and evaluation for many of these capabilities may not require a formal process through the service assigned Operational Test Agency (OTA). Anytime we bypass a proven process, however, the risk associated with that decision must be understood.

58. What do you see as the role of the developmental and operational test and evaluation communities with respect to rapid acquisition, spiral acquisition, and other evolutionary acquisition processes?

Developmental testing can be leveraged to evaluate a system in a controlled manner to either reduce system safety risk or evaluate particular conditions. Operational testing and evaluation allows trained users, familiar with similar systems, to find alternative ways to

employ a system in an operationally relevant environment. Both can be used to de-risk delivery of warfighting capabilities using trained crews in controlled environments to expedite acquisitions. We look forward to developing systems in virtual, relevant, and operationally-relevant environments with partnerships across the Test Enterprise and Digital Environments through the Joint Simulation Environment (JSE).

Like most approaches in today's environment, they must evolve into what is needed to meet the demands of the national security strategy and evolving threats. I believe there are opportunities for better aligning our acquisition and test structure to ensure a more iterative approach to both initial major acquisitions as well as the long-term modernization of forces, we must stop seeing programs that have an end state, i.e. IOT&E and FOT&E and realize that major acquisitions continuously evolve throughout their lifecycle and therefore must be managed and tested throughout these lifecycles.

With respect to rapid acquisition, adherence to Title 10 Operational Test responsibilities is paramount. Rapid acquisition must be done with intent to provide the warfighter what they need on the battlefield for tomorrow's fight. Spiral acquisitions and evolutionary acquisition processes sometime risk unacceptable dwell time in a continuous test loop, slowing down fielding. We have seen this with F-35, KC-46, and a host of other programs. We must be cognizant of our decisions when we write initial requirements and hold Prime Contractors accountable to develop the right product the first time. With all types of rapid acquisition, an operational need date must be publicly stated and all test timelines and risk decisions should flow from the need date. Integration of Developmental Test in concert with Operational Test will ensure both the taxpayer and warfighter get what they deserve with speed in relation to the enemy.

59. Are you satisfied with the Air Force's test and evaluation capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforce and infrastructure?

Yes. The Air Force has a dedicated test and evaluation (T&E) Enterprise that is continuously adapting to meet emergent threats and technologies. The T&E workforce is working to modernize and digitize where those investments will obtain the highest returns. If confirmed, I look forward to seeking opportunities made possible by digital engineering, automation, and agile software development to better integrate developmental and operational test in order to accelerate fielding of capabilities without increasing risk.

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

If confirmed, I will support continued investments to improve modeling and simulation capabilities, digital and automated tools, and prototyping to help refine technical requirements and measure technical success in critical areas such as Hypersonics, Cyber-Security, Autonomous Systems, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.

The DAF needs to move into a more cohesive digital environment that will allow rapid dissemination of information, faster collaboration between Contractor, Developmental, and Operational test, and higher levels of data standardization and accuracy. The Joint Simulation Environment (JSE) is a physics-based test environment designed to meet this goal. The DAF should require and fund all new programs to develop a parallel JSE instantiation. Separately, DAF test and evaluation capabilities are physically limited by national test and training range technological levels. It is challenging to test and evaluate major acquisitions in an operationally representative manner due to test range infrastructure and capability limitations. Ranges must be expanded and upgraded to allow for more realistic testing scenarios.

61. If confirmed, how would you accelerate the development of these new capabilities?

If confirmed, I will continue to leverage the successful partnerships between the Air Force Test Center (AFTC), Air Force Operational Test & Evaluation Center (AFOTEC), Program Executive Offices (PEOs), and our industry partners in improving current, and developing new, test approaches to support rapid acquisition of new capabilities.

Acceleration starts with requirements. We need to be diligent in understanding not what we want today but what we need for tomorrow and ensure the prime contractors understand the need. Too often we ask for specifics, driving contractors to descope, at a cost, a commercial off the shelf (COTS) system to fit our requirements when the COTS system was superior. The B-52 Radar Modernization Program demonstrates this danger, where we took a capable COTS radar and descope to a minimum viable product due to cost overruns. This is an example of when we must hold the prime contractor accountable. Separately, test and acquisition acceleration can be seen through simulation. DAF should ensure that new requirements include a mandate for JSE-compliant models. Expanding the JSE environment will benefit both the acquisition process and end user training and tactics development.

62. What are your views on the appropriate roles of Office of the Secretary of Defense developmental and operational testing organizations with respect to testing of Air Force systems?

I support the established role of OSW for the testing of Air Force systems. OSW oversight provides an independent assessment of the adequacy of the testing of Air Force systems. They also have visibility across the other Services which presents an opportunity to apply lessons learned and best practices in other services to improve the DoW's ability to deliver effective warfighting capability at the speed of relevance and more efficiently. If confirmed, I will ensure AF/TE and program offices continue to work closely with relevant DoW offices in the testing and assessment of Air Force systems.

I am less concerned about what the specific roles of these organizations are and more concerned that they are codified, limited and non-redundant. As Chief, if confirmed, my role regardless of these organizations is to produce the capabilities needed to win war

from the Air. If confirmed I will have the responsibility to organize, train, and equip our forces to be effective with these capabilities and when asked, provide these ready forces to integrate with the joint force to win wars. The roles of these OSW organizations should support, but not hinder this responsibility.

OSW should perform oversight of testing through high-level guidance, enabling the Services to work with respective Primes to develop the appropriate products. OSW should ensure acquisition approaches appropriately capture and report on the data collected through test but should avoid mandating test approaches. Ultimately, DOT&E should perform an advisory role to the Services while using Operational Test data to inform Congress.

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

Our rapid fielding policy and guidance allows for flexibility and supports the use of commercial technologies acquired or developed through non-traditional means. The operational test and evaluation process can assess fielding decisions of commercial technologies for military use based on the warfighter's requirements. This evaluation remains independent of the acquisition process by which the potential weapon system is procured.

I believe the system provides for that structurally, but due to manpower numbers, there is a limit to what they can provide and in order to onboard the vast amount of potential capability, especially in the rapidly growing UAS area, we must ensure we have more than one avenue to assess operational effectiveness or at least potential for operational effectiveness outside the current operational test and evaluation construct.

The DAF Operational Test community can play a role in ensuring commercial technologies under consideration by DoW are evaluated for effectiveness and suitability. Utilizing the test community to inform these decisions buys down risk of spending finite taxpayer dollars on systems that may not work in the intended operational environment.

64. What do you see as the operational test and evaluation needs for non-developmental or commercial items to ensure they can still meet the technical requirements and human factors needs of environments often more complex and demanding than commercial settings?

Given the rapid pace of commercial markets and commoditization of dual-use technologies, opportunities exist to accelerate the fielding of capabilities to the warfighter. Accelerated fielding must be balanced with a sufficient level of testing to ensure the safety and reliability of the capability for our warfighters. Prioritizing user feedback, eliminating policy barriers, and enabling an iterative test process will ensure commercial items can be rapidly adapted for military use without compromising desired

performance.

I think we need to put more trust in our airmen at all levels to use their knowledge and experience to make quick assessments of potential capabilities through experimentation at the field level. We need to take a look at our policy to ensure we are not limiting opportunities for success. We must understand that there will be some additional risk, be willing to accept that risk, and acknowledge that it is worth some technical, safety, suitability, and effectiveness risk to get a capability to the field in a timely manner. In order to be successful we must help field units understand their limitations and ensure they are reaching out to our expert test organizations when necessary.

Non-developmental items must be tested in operationally representative environments by representative users and maintainers. Areas of the combat environment that press the limits of commercial systems must be identified. It is crucial for thorough operational testing to ensure that the systems we field can meet our warfighters' needs and will not fail just when they need them the most.

Joint Acquisition

65. What are your views regarding the merit and feasibility of joint development and acquisition programs?

The Department of the Air Force has played a critical role in developing and integrating new capabilities to provide a technological advantage across the joint force. Joint development and acquisitions offer opportunities to accelerate development, reduce costs, and improve interoperability, as exemplified by the F-35's aim for a common multi-role fighter leading to shared benefits. However, these programs also present challenges, particularly the increase in technical complexity and the difficulty of balancing modernization with the urgent need to field operational capabilities.

I view joint programs as having significant potential benefits, including increased burden sharing, enhanced interoperability, access to diverse expertise/technologies, and strengthened partnerships. While those benefits are considerable, successful implementation requires careful consideration of potential challenges, particularly in aircraft and munitions programs. This would include joint programs being exported to our allies and partners. These challenges could be differing requirements, funding priorities, intellectual property concerns (protecting/managing), industrial base considerations, safety standards, export control, and program governance/management. In F-35, requirements and funding have been constant challenges annually as we look to the air system to Block 4. For AMRAAM and JATM, aligning procurements annually can be difficult when balancing competing priorities on next-generation munitions versus current year procurements. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Chief of Naval Operations, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and all the Service Acquisition Executives on early and continuous engagement, flexible program structures, strong

agreements, dedicated program management, and probably the most critical being sufficient and stable funding.

66. What additional programs would you consider to be candidates for joint development and acquisition?

If confirmed, I will be actively engaged with my counterparts across the other Services to identify any opportunities to pursue a joint development and acquisition. The announcement of the disestablishment of the Joint Capability Integration and Development System has pushed requirement decisions to the Services. This positions the Department of the Air Force to review, assess and validate capabilities for joint development and acquisition both interoperable and at a pace that ensures an advantage to our warfighters.

67. 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 advocate or manage Air Force capabilities to ensure there are no seams in planning or execution of such efforts?

The DAF has a robust C2 integration capability with the ABMS cross functional team (CFT) and the DAF PEO C3BM team. I have all the authorities I need for the work we need to do within the DAF. The CFT and PEO are integrating across requirements, acquisition, and budgeting to eliminate the historical seams in this mission area.

68. What are your views on the consolidation of major Air Force acquisition programs, such as Sentinel and F-47, within a direct reporting program manager office reporting directly to the Deputy Secretary of War?

Acquisition programs like Sentinel and F-47 are critical, and their success is imperative to our National Defense. I will fully support organizational structures to ensure successful delivery of these capabilities on the relevant timelines.

Nuclear Enterprise

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.

69. Do you agree with the assessment of numerous Secretaries, including Secretary Hegseth, that nuclear deterrence is DOW's highest priority mission and that modernizing our nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority?

Yes, I unequivocally agree. Maintaining a credible and effective nuclear deterrent is, in my assessment, the Department of War's highest priority mission, and modernizing our nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security imperative. This is essential for deterring aggression, assuring our allies, and maintaining strategic stability in an increasingly complex and dangerous world.

Yes. A credible, modernized and robust nuclear deterrent is critical for defending the US Homeland and addressing strategic threats to our country.

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.

70. Do you agree with this assessment?

Yes, China has a rapidly growing nuclear arsenal and has focused on both increasing the number of weapons at its disposal as well as increasing the diversity of delivery systems for those weapons. ([CSIS](#)) ([DoW](#))

Sources:

- DOW: <https://media.defense.gov/2024/Dec/18/2003615520/-1/-1/0/MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA-2024.PDF>
- CSIS: <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-nuclear-weapons/>
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- SecWar: <https://www.war.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/4193417/secretary-of-defense-pete-hegseth-statement-on-golden-dome-for-america/>
- ODNI: <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2025-Unclassified-Report.pdf>
- RAND: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA3859-1.html

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

Russia: Despite facing multiple failed tests of new systems, Russia is nearing completion of a decades-long nuclear modernization effort, with most of its nuclear triad now modernized. Russia is driven by its desire to maintain parity with the U.S., counter U.S. missile defense systems, and compensate for conventional force weaknesses exacerbated by losses in Ukraine. Still, it maintains a stockpile of warheads, including deployed strategic warheads on ICBMs, SLBMs, and at bomber bases). ([RAND](#)) ([ODNI](#))

China: China has rapidly expanded its nuclear arsenal from ~300 warheads in 2020 to ~600 in 2025, with projections of 1,500 by 2035. It has developed a nuclear triad, including silo-based and road-mobile ICBMs capable of reaching the U.S. homeland. China is also establishing new nuclear materials production and reprocessing facilities, despite its public support for a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty. ([DoW](#))

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

Yes. PRC nuclear modernization and expansion will increase its ability to target our homeland with longer-range systems that can reach the Continental United States. This is a primary reason to invest in Golden Dome. ([SecWar](#))

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

Yes. With projections of 1,500 warheads by 2035, China remains intent on modernizing, diversifying, and expanding its nuclear posture ([ODNI](#))

Over the next decade, China probably will continue to rapidly modernize, diversify, and expand its nuclear forces. The PLA seeks a larger and more diverse nuclear force, comprised of systems ranging from low-yield precision strike missiles to ICBMs with multi-megaton yields to provide options at every rung of the escalation ladder. ([DoW](#))

74. 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"?

From my understanding, China's approach to nuclear force includes a declaratory no-first-use (NFU) policy, stating it will never use nuclear weapons first at any time under any circumstances, including unconditionally not using or threatening use of nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear weapon state or in nuclear-weapon-free zones. ([CSIS](#)) While China's official NFU policy is officially unconditional, many observers are skeptical that the PLA will abide by this policy during a conflict. It remains unclear whether—and under what circumstances—China might initiate use of nuclear weapons. ([CSIS](#))

75. 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 our current deterrence policy and force structure effectively accounts for today's

strategic environment. However, with the potential expiration of the New-Start Treaty with Russia in February 2026 and with China's continued nuclear expansion and modernization, our current force structure could prove insufficient in the future. If confirmed, I will work with Office of the Secretary of War, Service, and Joint partners to ensure the Nation has the right combination of capabilities to ensure a credible deterrent for the future.

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

Our dual-capable aircraft in Europe and nuclear bombers provide effective regional and extended deterrent capabilities. Both NATO and Asia-Pacific allies consistently express confidence in our commitment and posture to provide extended deterrence and assurance to our allies.

77. 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, I do. The nuclear triad provides the President with a wide range of options to assure allies, deter aggression, and, if necessary, deliver effects in support of national objectives. Each leg of the triad is complementary; reducing or eliminating any leg or capability could undermine our overall deterrent.

The Air Force is responsible for maintaining and operating two legs of the Nation's strategic nuclear Triad, as well as most U.S. tactical nuclear capabilities, and much of the global command, control, and communications architecture needed to direct these forces. Previous administrations recognized the importance of modernizing aging U.S. nuclear capabilities, and prioritized investments to support the replacement and recapitalization of Air Force nuclear capabilities.

78. What is your understanding of the condition of existing Air Force nuclear deterrence capabilities, including delivery systems, command, control, and communications systems, and infrastructure?

The Air Force currently operates the majority of our Nation's safe, secure, reliable, and effective deterrence capabilities, including air and ground delivery systems and the necessary infrastructure to support and direct these forces. These current weapons and Nuclear Command, Control and Communications (NC3) systems, many of which have been extended decades past their planned end of life, continue to operate at the highest levels of readiness. This is thanks to the heroic efforts of our Airmen, in conjunction with industry partners and continued Congressional funding, to ensure their sustainment, and developing novel solutions to mitigate materiel obsolescence. However, parts

obsolescence and unavailability, ICBM and bomber fleet age, and rapid technological advancement challenge our ability to sustain nuclear deterrence beyond the near-term. It is only through the ongoing modernization of the nuclear enterprise that we can ensure the ability to defend our nation with a credible nuclear deterrent as well as provide an extended deterrent for our allies.

79. Do you agree that modernizing each leg of the nuclear triad and the National Nuclear Security Administration weapons complex is a critical national security priority?

Yes. A safe, secure, reliable, and effective nuclear triad, consisting of land-based ICBMs, strategic bombers, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles, is essential to deterring threats against the U.S. homeland and underpins every other military operation around the world. Each leg of the nuclear triad provides unique and complementary attributes that, together, offer the President flexibility and resilience to sustain credible assurance and deterrence. To ensure a credible strategic deterrent for the future, the Department of War is undergoing a once in a generation modernization effort across all three legs of nuclear triad. Just as the Navy is modernizing the sea leg of the triad, it is imperative the Air Force continue to recapitalize its two legs of the triad which have been service life extended multiple times, and are far beyond their original service lives. These modernization efforts will ensure we can continue to provide a credible nuclear deterrent for our Nation and extended deterrence for our allies. We rely on the National Nuclear Security Administration to produce and realize the full potential of our modernized weapons. Any delay in funding would put our modernization efforts at risk which could undermine the capability and credibility of our nuclear deterrent.

80. What is your assessment of the efficacy of current nuclear modernization acquisition programs with respect to nuclear certification of the systems at issue?

My assessment is that the current nuclear modernization acquisition programs are diligently working to meet the stringent requirements for nuclear certification. This certification process is paramount, ensuring the safety, security, reliability, and effectiveness of these systems. While challenges inevitably arise in complex acquisitions of this magnitude, I believe the dedicated professionals within the Air Force and the Department of War are committed to proactively identifying and mitigating risks to achieve successful nuclear certification for each of these critical programs. If confirmed, I would prioritize rigorous oversight and support for these programs to ensure we maintain a credible and reliable nuclear deterrent.

The current nuclear modernization acquisition programs are diligently working to meet the stringent requirements for nuclear certification. Our commitment to our Nation demands that the certification process ensures the safety, security, reliability, and effectiveness of these systems. The dedicated professionals within the Air Force are

committed to proactively identifying and mitigating risks to achieve successful nuclear certification for each critical programs. If confirmed, I will prioritize rigorous oversight and support for these programs to ensure we maintain a credible and reliable nuclear deterrent.

81. Do you believe the current Air Force program of record is sufficient to support the full modernization of the Air Force legs of the nuclear triad?

While the current Air Force program of record represents a significant investment in modernizing our nuclear capabilities, its sufficiency depends on a number of factors. These include consistent, on-time funding; successful execution of complex development programs; and the evolving threat landscape. If confirmed, I would continually assess the program of record to ensure it aligns with emerging threats and technological advancements, and advocate for adjustments as needed to ensure the Air Force effectively supports its legs of the nuclear triad and provides a credible and reliable deterrent.

Yes, the Air Force is fully committing the necessary resources to modernize the air and land legs of the nuclear triad, along with the Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) system. With continued Congressional support, the Air Force synchronizes efforts with the Department of War, National Nuclear Security Administration, and the US Navy, to ensure on-time delivery of warheads, platforms, and supporting infrastructure.

82. If confirmed, will you commit to supporting full funding for the efforts that comprise the program of record, including:

the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile system and the various supporting subprograms;

the B-21 Raider and integration activities for nuclear gravity bombs and the Long-Range Standoff Weapon;

the full range of Air Force nuclear command, control, and communications systems modernization, including the Survivable Airborne Operations Center; and

supporting infrastructure rehabilitation and capability enhancements, including replacement of the Vietnam-era UH-1N Huey helicopters with the MH-139 Grey Wolf?

Yes. If confirmed, I will support fully funding the programs of record for the nuclear modernization effort including Sentinel, B-21, LRSO, NC3, SAOC, and MH-139, among others.

I commit to working with Congress to fund the Air Force portion of the nuclear Triad, a

bedrock of our national defense. While our nuclear forces remain safe, secure, and effective, most systems are operating well beyond their original design life, with little margin between the end of service and the fielding of replacements. The last major recapitalization occurred in the 1980s, and modernization is essential to avoid gaps in deterrence.

These modernized capabilities are needed to avoid any gaps in our ability to field a credible and effective deterrent. A land-based ICBM is critical to our nuclear Triad, providing the most responsive capability and complicating the adversary's targeting calculus. The Air Force has sustained Minuteman III for decades and will continue to do so until its replacement is fielded.

The Air Force appreciates congressional support for the B-21 program, \$4.5B in the Reconciliation Bill, and remains committed to modernize the B-52 fleet and procuring B-21s while ensuring there is a credible readiness bridge to their fielding from the current bomber force.

The MH-139 replaces the aging UH-1N Huey across Air Force Global Strike Command's three ICBM wings (F.E. Warren, Malmstrom, Minot) and restores Maxwell Air Force Bases' Formal Training Unit to 10 aircraft. The FY26 PB procures 14 additional MH-139s.

A modernized land-based ICBM force, the B-21 Raider, a revitalized bomber fleet, nuclear command and control and Survivable Airborne Operations Center modernization, and the MH-139 Grey Wolf to replace the aging UH-1N fleet are all critical to sustaining a credible deterrent. The question is not whether to recapitalize, but how best to do so effectively and affordably.

83. What are your ideas for working across the Joint Force to help mitigate the risk that all three legs of the nuclear triad will begin "aging out" simultaneously at the end of the 2020s?

Mitigating the risk of simultaneous aging across all three legs of the nuclear triad requires proactive, collaborative planning and execution across the Joint Force. My approach would focus on three key areas:

- Prioritized and synchronized modernization: We need to ensure that modernization schedules are synchronized where possible to avoid concurrency risks and maximize efficiency.

- Robust life-extension programs: Aggressively pursue life-extension programs for existing systems to bridge the gap until new platforms are fully operational and certified.

- Strategic risk management: Employ a Joint Force-level risk management framework to identify and address potential vulnerabilities across the triad. Close collaboration with USSTRATCOM and the combined DoW-Department of Energy Nuclear Weapons Council will be essential.

Furthermore, I would champion a culture of continuous innovation and experimentation to explore alternative technologies and approaches that could extend the lifespan or enhance the capabilities of existing systems, reducing our reliance on a single, simultaneous modernization effort.

If confirmed, I will ensure the Air Force works with Navy and other DoW Components to identify “age-out” issues as we transition from our current systems to our new and modernized nuclear weapon systems. I will also work with our mission partners to develop options across the Joint Force to mitigate transition risk throughout the DoW Nuclear Enterprise. I also agree with the Secretary of the Air Force that the best way to reduce the risk of “aging out” is to ensure we effectively manage the end-of-life margin on our current systems while keeping current modernization efforts on track by maintaining stable funding for all three legs of the triad. Additionally, I will work with the Nuclear Weapons Council and the Defense Acquisition Board to identify opportunities to partner with the Navy and, when appropriate, jointly develop technologies critical to the success of both our missions. I will also ensure our respective research and development teams are leveraging each other’s technological accomplishments to minimize duplication of effort.

In 2014, then-Secretary of Defense Hagel directed a comprehensive review of the DOW nuclear enterprise in response to adverse incidents involving U.S. nuclear forces and their senior leadership. The review recommended improved personnel management, enforcement of security requirements, increased senior leader focus and attention, and changes in community culture. Almost 10 years later, responsibility for addressing these recommendations and monitoring implementation of corrective actions has been transferred from OSD to the Military Services.

84. In your view, is the Air Force continuing to maintain appropriate focus on implementing the corrective actions recommended by the Nuclear Enterprise Review?

Yes, I do. Implementing the corrective actions from the Nuclear Enterprise Review remains a top priority of the Air Force. Senior leaders continue to be regularly engaged and budget priorities reflect an emphasis on modernization efforts across the Air Force nuclear enterprise.

85. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the Air Force continues its efforts to improve the training, readiness, morale, welfare, and quality of life of the airmen charged to execute and support the Air Force’s nuclear mission?

If confirmed, I will prioritize sustained leadership engagement, resource allocation, and rigorous oversight to ensure the fullest readiness of our Airmen executing and supporting the nuclear mission. This includes dedicated funding for facilities, equipment, and

personnel programs, coupled with a focus on fostering warrior ethos and modernizing training through the integration of cutting-edge technologies.

Air Force Programs

86. What is your understanding and assessment of the following research, development, and acquisition programs? Is each program currently within projected cost, schedule, and performance criteria? If not, what would you do, if confirmed as Chief of Staff of the Air Force, to bring each program into compliance?

- **F-35 Block 4:** I am aware of development efforts within the F-35 program that are not within projected cost, schedule, and performance criteria. If confirmed, I will work with Service and OSW Acquisition Executives to verify that contractual commitments are being met to ensure combat-relevant capability is delivered to the warfighter.
- **F-47:** The F-47, the world's first 6th Generation Fighter aircraft, will secure our nation's air superiority against growing global threats, embodying the best of American innovation and industrial strength. Engineered to outpace, outmaneuver, and outmatch any adversary, the F-47 is designed to adapt swiftly to emerging threats, ensuring the Air Force can fly, fight, and win anytime, anywhere, delivering a decisive advantage if deterrence fails. In the few short months since the program was announced by the President, they have already begun to manufacture the first article and are executing within cost, schedule, and performance criteria. If confirmed, I will work with the Service Acquisition Executive and industry partners to meet program objectives and ensure we deliver the right capabilities to maintain air superiority against pacing threats around the globe.
- **F-15EX:** The F-15EX program is within projected cost, schedule, and performance criteria. Lot 1 aircraft have delivered. Lot 2 aircraft, initially expected to deliver this calendar year, are delayed due to the ongoing Boeing strikes with 6 of 12 F-15EX delivered to date. These delays will impact F-15EX operations at Portland ANGB as well as delay initial OCONUS fielding of Lot 3 aircraft in CY 2026. While later than initially planned, aircraft deliveries and program milestone dates remain within the program's acquisition baseline. If confirmed, I will work with the Service Acquisition Executive to ensure this program progresses to provide the necessary combat capability.
- **E-7:** The E-7 is a very capable air moving target indicator (AMTI) and battle management command and control (BMC2) platform. However, the intent of the Department is to terminate the E-7 program and transition AMTI and BMC2

capabilities to the Navy's E-2D and to overhead assets in accordance with the FY26 PB.

- **KC-46:** I understand that the KC-46A is on a Firm Fixed Price Not-To Exceed cost lot procurement contract with Boeing and it remains within the projected program costs. Though we have had performance and schedule setbacks, if confirmed, I will continue to work with the Service Acquisition Executive and MAJCOM leaders to recapture criteria while proceeding with extending the production line and procuring more KC-46As. As we work to resolve the outstanding Category I performance deficiencies, Air Mobility Command (AMC) has cleared KC-46As to carry out operational refueling on nearly all required aircraft and made KC-46As available for worldwide operational employment and taskings, including the KC-46's first operational deployment last year. If confirmed, I will work with the AMC Commander to ensure we learn from those ongoing employments to rapidly increase the KC-46As capability and availability to meet the mounting demand for aerial-refueling operations.
- **F-22:** I'm very familiar with the F-22, having recently flown the most modern version of the jet, and I know the technical challenges its modernization programs face. The timely delivery of these capabilities is core to the Air Force's mission. I am aware that the acquisition community is leveraging software acquisition authorities and new contract incentives to improve outcomes. If confirmed, integrated Air Dominance will be a focus for me, and I plan to engage with the Service Acquisition Executive and industry partners to improve delivery timelines and operational capabilities for F-22 and other Air Dominance systems.
- **B-21:** The B-21 program continues to make great progress. We just accepted T-2 which allows the government to further expand test capacity as we look to move on to mission system testing. This test data will prove our capability we promised to deliver to the warfighter. As we look to production, we are still working our way down the learning curve as we increase production capacity.
- The program details are not releasable in this forum, but I remain committed to being transparent with the Congress as the B-21 program moves forward.
- **MH-139A:** The MH-139A remains a critical enabler for Global Strike Command's strategic deterrence mission. The program experienced a Nunn-McCurdy breach due to reduced aircraft procurement and a subsequent unit cost increase. Initial Operational Test and Evaluation concluded successfully in June. Full-Rate Production approval is anticipated in 2nd Quarter FY26. If confirmed, I will continue to coordinate with the Service Acquisition Executive to resolve the Nunn-McCurdy cost breach.
- **EA-37B:** I am aware that the Compass Call Rehost program is transitioning the EC-130H electromagnetic attack mission capabilities onto a commercial derivative Gulfstream G550 aircraft and that the Air Force is completing

developmental and operational testing. Interim fielding has commenced with ACC receiving 2x EA-37B aircraft for initial training. Following DT/OT, 2 additional EA-37B aircraft will deliver within 1QFY26. As a result of obsolescence issues and evolving processing requirements, Baseline 4 delivery schedule is at risk by 10 months. If confirmed, I will work with the Service Acquisition Executive to ensure the EA-37B program progresses well and remains within projected cost, schedule, and performance criteria. The Air Force is committed to fielding the modernized and balanced force required to compete in a highly contested environment.

- **Air Force One:** The VC-25B is within cost and performance criteria but behind schedule. To accelerate, the White House stood up a task force in February 2025 with members from across the department and Boeing. The program has gone through a restructure over the last 8 months to accelerate delivery and is on a good path. Based on the work done to date, Boeing's projected delivery of first aircraft is in 2028, which is at least 2 years sooner than previously projected. If confirmed, I will continue the outstanding work the team has accomplished to date as well as look for additional opportunities to help the team achieve or beat the projected new delivery date.
- **B-52 engine and overall modernization:** The B-52 is undergoing the most significant modernization in the platform's history, including an engine upgrade, radar modernization, and nuclear survivable communications. I am aware that the program is also executing multiple development and modernization programs to sustain fleet viability and improve operational availability through 2050. I am aware that the B-52 Commercial Engine Replacement Program and overall modernization efforts are within projected cost, schedule, and performance criteria. I am aware of the B-52 Radar Modernization Program's significant Nunn-McCurdy breach, of which the Secretary of the Air Force notified Congress on 23 May 2025. If confirmed, I will continue to track these critical modernization efforts closely with the Service Acquisition Executive.
- **Combat Rescue Helicopter:** The HH-60W will supersede the HH-60G as the Air Force's primary combat search and rescue helicopter, with the HH-60G fleet retiring entirely by Fiscal Year 2026. The HH-60W program remains on schedule and within budget. Following initial operational testing, the program is actively addressing identified deficiencies through ongoing Follow-on Operational Test and Evaluation. Currently in full-rate production, the HH-60W is deploying operationally and successfully executed personnel recovery missions, saving multiple lives. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Service Acquisition Executive to guarantee the Combat Rescue Helicopter's continued effectiveness in personnel recovery operations. The HH-60W experienced multiple hoist electrostatic shocking incidents. The Air Force acquisition enterprise, to include industry partners, is actively investigating the root cause and potential solutions to mitigate operational concerns. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Service

Acquisition Executive to guarantee the Combat Rescue Helicopter's continued effectiveness in personnel recovery operations.

- **Sentinel Intercontinental Ballistic Missile:** Following the critical Nunn-McCurdy breach declared on January 18 2024, and the certification of the program on July 8, 2024 by the Under Secretary of War for Acquisition and Sustainment, the Air Force is committed to funding and aggressively executing the Sentinel program to field new systems as quickly and effectively as possible, while addressing the root causes of the cost and schedule growth. The Air Force is making substantial progress on the program to include developing and testing the missile, establishing and bolstering the supply chain, and maturing the design and construction approach. Additionally, while construction of some facilities is underway, our focus is restructuring the program, achieving Milestone B, and finalizing the baseline schedule while continuing to assess options and design concepts. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Service and Acquisition Executives to ensure this priority program continues to make rapid progress. I will also work closely with the Service Acquisition Executive to continue to sustain Minuteman III and ensure it remains a reliable and effective deterrent until the transition to the Sentinel system is complete.
- **Long Range Standoff Weapon:** I understand that this joint Department of Energy (DOE) and Department of War (DoW) effort is currently within projected cost, schedule, and performance criteria. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Service and Acquisition Executives to ensure the program continues to make significant progress against stated requirements and remains on track to meet the warfighter need date.
- **Next Gen OPIR and Proliferated OPIR.**
I am committed to reinforcing transparency, strengthening cross-services integration, and ensuring these programs remain tightly aligned with joint warfighter needs. Next Gen OPIR is a critical upgrade to our missile warning capabilities, and proliferated OPIR complements this effort with a distributed, lower-cost satellite architecture. It aligns with DoW's push for agile acquisition and commercial innovation. Early signs show it is on track. If confirmed, I will support Secretary Meink and the Service Acquisition Executive for Space Systems and Programs regarding these critical missile warning / missile tracking programs.
- **ABMS/JADC2:** It is my understanding that the ABMS program is currently within projected cost, schedule, and performance criteria. If confirmed, I will work with the Service Acquisition executive to ensure continued delivery of operational and modernized C2 capability in FY26, directly enabling realization of the Department of War Combined Joint All-Domain Command and Control initiative.

- **Unified Platform:**

Unified Platform (UP) is a critical element of USCYBERCOM's Joint Cyber Warfighting Architecture (JCWA), designed to integrate disparate software platforms and deliver next-generation cyber capabilities to our Cyber Mission Forces. As directed by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, Section 1507, USCYBERCOM holds fiscal responsibility, value assessment, and technical direction for UP. The Air Force, as the designated Executive Agent, is currently executing the program and will transfer acquisition authority to USCYBERCOM per the NDAA for FY 2023, Section 1509.

The program's adherence to cost, schedule, and performance criteria is of utmost importance. UP is leveraging the Software Acquisition Pathway effectively and employing modern agile software practices to rapidly deliver operational capabilities against evolving cyber threats. The quarterly planning cadence orchestrated by USCYBERCOM appears to be facilitating responsive capability delivery.

As Chief of Staff, I would prioritize continuous, rigorous oversight and data-driven assessments of UP's performance against established baselines.

Specifically, I would ensure:

- **Transparent Reporting:** Establish clear lines of communication and reporting between the Air Force, USCYBERCOM, and relevant stakeholders to ensure timely identification and proactive mitigation of any potential deviations from projected cost, schedule, or performance targets.
- **Risk Mitigation Plans:** Review and refine risk mitigation plans to address potential challenges in technology development, integration, and deployment.
- **Interoperability Focus:** Emphasize interoperability and seamless integration with other JCWA components, ensuring UP contributes effectively to the overall cyber warfighting architecture.
- **Accountability:** I will work with USCYBERCOM to ensure clear accountability for program execution and performance.
- **Regular Independent Reviews:** Advocate for periodic independent reviews to validate program assumptions, assess technical progress, and identify opportunities for optimization.

Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that UP delivers the advanced cyber capabilities our warfighters need, on time and within budget, and that it remains aligned with the broader strategic objectives of USCYBERCOM and the Department of War.

- **Armed Overwatch:** The OA-1K Skyraider II is a USSOCOM program not managed by USAF. The OA-1K is a cost-effective, rapidly deployable, multi-role Armed Overwatch platform capable of austere operations. It is uniquely designed to support Defense of the Homeland, Crisis Response, and CT/CVEO operations.

The program is within acquisition program baseline parameters with regards to cost, schedule, and performance. Aircraft delivery is on track with 14 total aircraft delivered to date with ongoing government verification testing.

- **T-7:** The T-7 program is critical to the future of pilot training. I understand its developmental challenges, including the Milestone C delay to 2nd Quarter FY26. While significant progress is being made in resolving engineering hurdles, especially those related to the escape system, I believe proactive and continuous oversight is paramount to mitigating technical and programmatic risks. As Chief of Staff, I will engage directly with the Service Acquisition Executive and Boeing leadership to foster a data-driven approach to problem-solving and ensure timely delivery of a capable trainer. This will be achieved through transparent communication and rigorous milestone tracking.
- **Collaborative Combat Aircraft:** I view the Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) program as foundational to the Air Force's future readiness. We are not just prioritizing it, we are aggressively accelerating the fielding of its first increment, with plans in place to initiate the second increment in early FY26. This initiative is pivotal: it leverages cutting-edge autonomy to create a powerful partnership with our crewed platforms, fundamentally reshaping our approach to air superiority. Furthermore, CCA are purposefully designed for sustained affordability, driving down lifecycle costs through reduced operational demands, simplified logistics, and lower sustainment. I can confirm the program is currently performing well, meeting all cost, schedule, and performance criteria. If confirmed, my leadership will be committed to a collaborative approach with the Service Acquisition Executive and industry to not only meet our ambitious program objectives but to decisively deliver the advanced capabilities necessary to maintain unquestioned air superiority against any pacing threat, anywhere in the world.

The Air Force is on record as stating a need to purchase a minimum of 72 fighter aircraft per year to maintain requisite force structure.

87. In your opinion, what is the optimum mix of 4th, 5th, and 6th generation aircraft required to meet the threat outlined in the INDSG?

The Air Force must evolve the fighter force to defend the homeland, deter peer adversaries, and decisively win the nation's wars through securing air superiority and air dominance for the Joint Force – a non-negotiable prerequisite for successful joint operations. The Air Force must modernize its fighter force through modifications of the fleet and through procurement of new aircraft to provide the capability, capacity, and readiness to meet worldwide demands in the 2030s and beyond. The Air Force will continue to modernize to ensure a more lethal, resilient, sustainable, survivable, agile, and responsive force. This will include a balanced mix of dedicated air superiority fighters and multi-role Global Precision Attack fighters, ensuring the needed capability

and capacity to defend the homeland, project airpower globally, and operate as a joint, allied, and partner force.

To attain the required fighter force, the Air Force must continue transitioning its fighter fleet from F-35, F-22, F-16, F-15EX, F-15E, F-15C, A-10, to a newer, modernized force of F-47, F-35, F-15E, F-15EX, F-16, and YF-42/44 Collaborative Combat Aircraft. Squadrons with aging fleets within all components (Active Duty, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve Component) are being modernized with advanced capabilities, recapitalized with newer F-16s, F-15EX or fifth-generation fighters. The Air Force prioritizes a proper mix of test, training, and combat-coded aircraft across the AD, ANG, and USAF Reserve to ensure adequate levels of research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E), aircrew training, and combat force generation are achievable to meet the Nation's demands.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure we have the optimal portfolio mix of capability and capacity to most effectively meet the demands of the 2025 INDSG.

88. Given the importance of extending the range of U.S. aircraft, what do you believe to be the overall tanker requirement for the Air Force and at what rate and on what schedule must the Air Force procure the new KC-46 to meet that requirement?

Currently, the Air Force assesses that a total tanker inventory of 466 aircraft meets mission requirements. The FY26 President's Budget includes procurement of 15 KC-46 aircraft, continuing steady modernization of the tanker fleet. USTRANSCOM's ongoing Mobility Capability Requirements Study, expected in summer 2026, will inform future aerial refueling force structure requirements. Until that analysis is complete, it would be premature to consider alternative force levels or modify the planned procurement path.

To maintain the Rapid Global Mobility strategic advantage, tanker aircraft must be able to operate in contested environments and be able to see and identify threats to make timely decisions. To meet the needs of the joint force, allies and partners, the DAF intends to maintain a 466 Total Active Inventory (TAI) tanker fleet in accordance with the FY23 NDAA to present an acceptable balance between warfighter risk and the critical need to invest in tanker modernization and recapitalization. I support the DAF's goal to use the KC-46 Production Extension program to procure up to 75 KC-46s to recapitalize aging KC-135 aircraft on a one for one basis.

89. What are your views of the Air Force plans to shift to a new design for strategic tankers?

I support the Department of the Air Force's plans to ensure that we are ready to project power effectively and efficiently, especially in contested environments. The KC-46A is currently addressing an urgent need to modernize the fleet. The Next Generation Air-Refueling System (NGAS) Analysis of Alternatives proves that connectivity and self-protection for our aircraft are crucial for future fights. If confirmed, I look forward to helping the Department strike the right balance between KC-46A and an NGAS, and that

includes potentially exploring a new tanker design that takes advantage of advanced avionics capabilities and a reduced radar cross section.

Large-scale exercises such as Red Flag have illustrated that 5th generation fighters such as the F-22 and F-35 need to fly against multiple adversary aircraft to conduct much of their required training. The Air Force has taken a number of steps to address shortages in adversary air, including using contract air and requiring units in training to supply their own adversary air.

90. What are your views as to the appropriate balance of contract and organic adversary air capability?

With the emphasis on preparing for the peer fight, the Air Force Adversary Air Enterprise must be able to replicate the high-end threat of advanced fighters with Red Force Ratios that outnumber Blue Forces; integrate diverse, multi domain threats; and have robust electromagnetic activity to complicate blue force targeting. Satisfying all high-end training OPSEC variables is unattainable in live-fly with our current adversary air and range capabilities. As a result, the Air Force is transitioning high-end training to the synthetic environment.

Until this transition is complete, balancing the limited Adversary Air Enterprise resources for test, training, and operational units requires a prioritized distribution of organic adversary air support as well as contracted air support at appropriate locations while meeting combat requirements.

In addition to the OPSEC challenges, organic adversary air sorties are hindered by low aircraft availability rates.

The Air Force is also investing in research and development for augmented reality capabilities that can enhance live fly by providing realistic presentations of constructive adversaries in the aircraft. If successful, an augmented reality capability could reduce the need for live adversary air while also minimizing OPSEC concerns. The basic technology has shown promise, but work remains to successfully integrate into our 5th Gen weapon systems.

91. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the Air Force properly addresses the challenges associated with the availability of adversary air to ensure that its 5th generation fighters are properly trained and ready for combat?

While future high-end training, test, and tactics development will be best executed in the synthetic training environment due to OPSEC, threat density, and limited range space, the requirement to conduct live combat training and testing remains. Live training provides the baseline against which the United States Air Force measures aircraft generation, maintenance and logistics support capabilities, aircraft avionics, weapons systems integration effectiveness, and aircrew physiological stresses.

Additionally, it is imperative our approach include early integration of our partner nations considering European theater the 5th generation fighter inventory will grow. Specifically, Joint Synthetic Environment (JSE) will allow fighter pilots to train as a combined and joint force, using extremely high fidelity capabilities to train above the level available in relation to live flying. Technology like JSE is the needed additive training, supplementing live flights, to keep our fighter force trained to the highest caliber against the pacing threat.

Moreover, I will continue to support contract adversary air and R&D efforts for long-term organic adversary air solutions (manned or unmanned), as allowed by budgetary priorities

92. What is your assessment of the readiness of the Air Force heavy bomber fleet? As to each of the airframes listed below, what improvements would you direct, if confirmed, to increase the mission readiness of each airframe?

- **B-1**
- **B-52**
- **B-2**

- The B-1, B-52, and B-2 fleets are ready for mission. However, with over half of bomber units reporting personnel shortages in key roles like pilots, navigators, and maintenance, immediate action is needed to improve our Service's long range kill chain.
- To address training gaps and to improve combat readiness, we must invest in operational training infrastructure, such as advanced simulators, while improving aircraft availability.
- In addition to a wide range of sustainment challenges and much-needed upgrades, we must deliberately focus on both recruiting and retaining qualified personnel for these communities.
- To maintain long range strike against the pacing threat, the Air Force intends to sustain the B-1 and B-2 until at least the B-52H is modernized into the B-52J and the B-21 comes online.

Munitions

Air Force munitions inventories—particularly for precision guided munitions and air-to-air missiles—have declined significantly due to high operational usage, insufficient procurement, and a requirements system that does not adequately account for the ongoing need to transfer munitions to our allies. Due to the draw down of certain weapons systems to support Ukraine and defend shipping lanes in the Red Sea, the Department of War has begun efforts to increase production and bolster the industrial base.

93. If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure the Air Force has sufficient inventories of munitions to meet the needs of combatant commanders?

If confirmed, I will meet with my Joint Chief's counterparts, Combatant Commanders, Critical Allies and Industry leaders to discuss munitions inventory requirements and prioritize building munition inventories to rapid capacity. I will team with the Service Acquisition Executive to streamline and expedite foreign military sales processes, establish and strengthen reciprocal replenishment agreements with allies and partners to contribute to the sustainability of the munitions supply chain and where feasible, explore production opportunities with trusted allies to enhance munitions production capacity and promote technology sharing.

94. What changes in budgeting and acquisition processes would you recommend to facilitate faster Air Force munitions replenishment rates?

We must set a clear and consistent demand signal to industry with regard to munitions procurement plans. This will enable primes to make the necessary investments in production capacity and supply chains to meet US and partner demand. The Air Force will expand its requests to Congress for Multi-Year Procurement authority, where applicable, across our weapons portfolio to foster industry investment enabling increased production rates and reduced delivery schedules.

Equipment Readiness

95. What is your understanding and assessment of the methods currently used for estimating the funding needed for the maintenance of Air Force equipment?

Securing the right amount of spare parts for weapon systems is a challenging endeavor. No single entity is responsible for Air Force sustainment; it is a federation of organizations with a Centralized Asset Management oversight structure to conduct requirements determination, resource prioritization, and budgeting and execution processes. This structure is guided by an Executive Committee comprised of functional area and Major Command experts who ultimately balance risk within the sustainment portfolio to enable readiness.

The Air Force uses a rigorous, bottom-up Logistics Requirements Determination Process to develop, validate, prioritize, and calculate sustainment requirements by building from individual tasks. Each sustainment task is meticulously catalogued and tracked within a management information system. The requirements are built spanning the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP), with multiple looks during both the Program Objective Memorandum (POM) year as well as during the year of execution, allowing for re-prioritization of funding as required.

Additionally, the Air Force uses a thorough Spares Requirements Review Board, analyzing historical usage data, down to individual items, to forecast needs. While the process accounts for economic trends, the inherent uncertainty of predicting requirements

two years out, coupled with unforeseen operational surges and the difficulties of supporting older aircraft, create significant obstacles.

These processes rely upon stable and consistent funding, which signals the defense industrial base to respond versus react to our sustainment requirements and ultimately our readiness needs.

96. Do you believe that increased investment is needed to reduce the backlog in equipment maintenance?

Yes, higher levels of both immediate and future readiness require increased investment. Additional resources would enable the Air Force to improve equipment maintenance and invest in advanced equipment essential for future missions. However, the realization of these investments is reliant on a stable and predictable funding stream which signals to the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) a consistent need, offering greater opportunity to achieve those requirements. This can enable long-term return on investment within the sustainment portfolio which is essential for accurate planning and execution of equipment maintenance activities.

We are maintaining an older fleet of aircraft with the average age being 30.9 years. This is a high water mark especially compared to an average age of 17.2 years in 1994. These older vehicles require more maintenance and care at higher costs to ensure readiness.

97. How important is reduction of the materiel maintenance backlog to improvements in readiness?

Fiscal constraints and supply chain disruptions have created variable maintenance backlogs across the Air Force's weapon systems. Reducing these backlogs is essential to improving Air Force readiness and requires a balanced strategy for managing both near- and long-term risk. Congressional support for the President's Budget request is critical to provide increased weapon system sustainment, training, and infrastructure funding, enabling the Air Force to eliminate these backlogs and improve readiness.

98. What is your approach to attach the significant shortfall of spares and the lack of parts availability to improve readiness?

A shortfall of spares as well as spares availability has been a long-standing challenge for the last 15 years and has become even more concerning during the last five years. A \$1.5B funding cut in FY20-21, inflation, price increases, supply chain inefficiencies, and increased requirements above normal replenishment cycles are the key reasons for spares shortfalls. To get after the current unfunded spares requirement, which remains at \$8.9B, sustained funding over the next 10 years will be critical to restoring readiness spares to healthy levels.

The Department of the Air Force is changing its readiness trajectory through an integrated plan with prioritization and targeted investment across areas of compounding

risk. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of War and Congress to recapitalize our aging fleet and increase investments in WSS and spares to deliver higher aircraft availability (AA) and mission capability (MC) rates. Directing the Air Force to retain aircraft not fit for high-end conflict leads to diminishing aircraft availability and mission capable rates because constrained resources (funding, manpower, spares, WSS) will be spread across a larger fleet risking the Air Force ability to deliver ready fleet for world-wide commitments. Additionally, I will work to stabilize consistent funding in readiness accounts, especially for spare parts, in order to signal our requirements to the Defense Industrial Base (DIB), offering greater opportunity to achieve those requirements and maintain healthy shelf stocks.

Indo-Pacific Region

China's robust anti-access, area denial (A2/AD) capabilities—including long-range ballistic and cruise missiles, advanced integrated air defenses, electronic warfare, and cyber—pose a significant challenge for U.S. forces. The Commander of United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) and the Chiefs of the Military Services have often emphasized the importance of distributed, adaptive, and resilient basing in the Indo-Pacific region to address the challenge posed by China's advanced A2/AD capabilities.

99. What are the key areas in which the Air Force must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to prevail in a potential conflict with China?

We must improve in our ability to deliver penetrating strike at scale despite the adversary's A2AD capabilities. We cannot continue to retreat. We will win by holding any target at risk with both resilient and integrated stand-in and stand-off system of kill webs.

The future operating environment demands an USAF that presents a range of flexible capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force for homeland defense, strategic deterrence and power projection. In all three of these cases China is our pacing threat – it is imperative that we modernize the force as the future operating environment demands a USAF that's dynamic and built to shape the battlespace and respond with precision. We must complicate the adversary's targeting efforts by leveraging affordable mass munitions [co-production/expanded DIB/co-deployment]; increased conceal/surprise/deception capabilities; adaptive defense/air base defense; addressing congested logistics; increasing decision advantage [mission command/AI/human-machine teaming]; pulsed operations; agile, decentralized C2; improved resiliency, integration, adaptability; increases in Ally and Partner integration and partnering.

The future operating environment demands a USAF that's dynamic and built to shape the battlespace and respond with precision. Legacy systems and processes may no longer deliver decision advantage and USAF acquisitions, modernization, and sustainment processes must be reexamined for speed, relevance, and responsiveness.

100. How does the threat posed by Chinese missile forces affect the Air Force's posture in the Indo-Pacific region? In your assessment, have Air Force investments, posture shifts and/or new operational concepts sufficiently addressed this threat?

The threat to USAF forces and facilities from People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) are ever increasing due to the growing number, type, range and sophistication of missiles being produced year over year. Additionally, planned joint air and missile defense capability and capacity are insufficient to counter the full range of adversary missile capabilities and are not optimized to provide expeditionary protection for dispersed bases. DoW investments in air and missile defense capability and capacity are inadequate and are not keeping pace with the growing threat. Increased DoW investments in low-cost, deep-magazine, expeditionary defenses against air threats and cruise, ballistic, and hypersonic missile threats are urgently needed.

While the USAF has made some progress in addressing the Chinese missile threat, vulnerabilities remain. The Agile Combat Employment (ACE) concept will make it harder for China to neutralize operations and increases aimpoints that must be targeted. The USAF must increase the hardening of facilities; increase camouflage, concealment, and decoy options; and, increase mitigation measure options that all align the most apt tools and tactics at the appropriate time and space for the enemy's targeting cycle.

101. Do you believe the planned joint force mix of tactical aircraft is sufficient to counter current and future threats in INDOPACOM, where the "tyranny of distance" is such a major factor?

No, we must continue to resource and develop a joint force mix of tactical aircraft in order to counter INDOPACOM threats. The Air Force must prioritize preserving, recapitalizing, and modernizing the tactical aircraft inventory, ensuring a viable, modernized fighter force to provide flexible options to joint force combatant commander for homeland defense, strategic deterrence, and defeating our adversaries.

102. Do you believe DOW has sufficient sealift and airlift capabilities to support the Air Forces throughout INDOPACOM for both training and contingency purposes?

We have gaps in our existing lift capacity. Ensuring ready mobility capability remains an imperative, emphasizing the importance of balanced theater airlift and sealift capabilities. This includes contingency operation support as well as contested resupply throughout the INDOPACOM area of responsibility. If confirmed, I will work closely with my fellow Joint Chiefs to ensure we field the best solutions for the Joint Force.

103. What alternative concepts of operation, platforms, and basing opportunities exist to address potential shortfalls in this area?

A strong forward presence deters adversaries, and it requires investment in more basing options and the ability to defend those bases. The Air Force's Agile Combat Employment

(ACE) concept is critical for maneuvering effectively in contested environments and countering threats to forward bases. The linchpin for supporting ACE around the world is Air Force prepositioned equipment packages, tailored to both the specific theater point of use as well as to the various commands and mission sets that use them (i.e. PACAF, USAFE, ACC, AMC, Global Strike). While still in development and in need of significant investment, this Air Force strategy for globally setting the theaters will enable force readiness and effectiveness during conflicts and contingencies.

Europe

The Trump Administration's 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) described long term strategic competition with Russia and China as the principal priorities for the Department. Since that time Russia has invaded Ukraine, added additional novel nuclear capabilities to the world's largest and most diverse nuclear arsenal and is fielding anti-satellite and counterspace capabilities designed to destroy U.S. space assets. Despite this, the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) describes China and the U.S. homeland as the top priorities, while treating Russia as a lesser-included threat.

104. What are the key areas in which the Air Force must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to meet INDSG priorities in the European AOR?

The 2025 INDSG describes China and the U.S. homeland as the top priorities, while acknowledging that Russia remains a present threat in Europe. Preparing to meet the challenges posed by the PRC, we are maintaining the ability to support the Joint Force in deterring further aggression in Europe. This requires agile, resilient, adaptable concepts and command and control structures. Better system integration will be the key to combat success in the future. Burden sharing with allies and partners and the ability to rapidly respond or deploy if needed.

Unmanned Systems

105. What is your opinion on the manned and unmanned teaming envisioned by the Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) program?

My opinion is CCA represents a transformational and force multiplying capability critical to mission success in highly contested engagements against a peer-type threat. CCA will be designed to work in conjunction with 5th generation and 6th generation aircraft. CCA will provide the mass needed to sustain a sufficient sortie tempo, at a more affordable price point, and will give commanders more options by providing risk-tolerant assets with an operationally relevant capability. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Service Acquisition Executive to get an operational CCA capability fielded as quickly as possible.

106. Given the amount of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) required to meet combatant commander demands, do you believe it is appropriate to shut down the production lines for the current unmanned fleet of MQ-9s and divest all of the RQ-4s before adequate ISR capacity in other systems is fielded as a substitute?

The success of the joint force in a future fight is highly dependent upon our ability to sense, make sense, and act in both contested and non-contested environments. While it is certain that both the MQ-9 and RQ-4 are not survivable in contested environments, their utility in non-contested environments is tremendous. If confirmed, I am committed to advancing both our high-end ISR capabilities through a modernized, systems-focused approach, as well as our low-end capabilities that have proven their effectiveness and offset expensive manned platform alternatives.

107. Do you see utility in encouraging the Military Services to conduct more joint development in the area of aircraft and unmanned systems?

The Department of the Air Force has historically been a leading developer and integrator of advanced technology for military advantage with significant benefits to the joint warfighter. When practical, we should contribute to and leverage the development efforts of other Services and our coalition partners. This allows the Air Force to accept prudent risk, reduce costs, and increase resilience in our collective capabilities.

Major Defense Acquisition Programs (MDAPs): It is best to assign a lead service to control requirements, focus investments, and support the preponderance of capability delivery. This has worked well with the AMRAAM Program Office (Air Force Led, Navy Supported) and the SIDEWINDER Program Office (Navy Led, Air Force Supported). The F-35 is a classic example where the benefits of interoperability, supply chain partnerships, and development engineering were offset by regrets incurred by massive over-commitment and confusing requirements management as no individual service had the lead in the program.

Small Unmanned Aerial Systems (sUAS): Group 1, 2, and 3 UAS looks to have potential as commodities, all services can benefit from joint development and PROCUREMENT, as these systems can meet very precise and limited requirements (range, sensors, interoperability), but can be tailored through tactics, techniques, and procedures to meet individual service requirements without significant modifications.

MDAP UAS Programs: Should be treated in the same manner as manned aircraft, wherein a lead service should be given the onus to develop in close coordination with Joint partners, and delivery of end products can be transferred or utilized by other services. Good examples of this are the MQ-9 and RQ-4, both Air Force systems that have found relevance in sister services (USMC, USN, respectively) as well as Allied (NATO ISR) militaries.

Operational Energy

The Department defines *operational energy* as the energy required for training, moving, and sustaining military forces and weapons platforms for military operations, including the energy used by tactical power systems, generators, and weapons platforms. Longer operating distances, remote and austere geography, and anti-access/area denial threats are challenging DOW's ability to assure the delivery of fuel. As the ability to deliver energy is placed at risk, so too is the Department's ability to deploy and sustain expeditionary Air Force units around the globe.

108. What are your ideas for future capabilities that would enable an expeditionary Air Force through the assured delivery of energy to the warfighter?

If confirmed, I will work to pursue revolutionary future capabilities that deliver energy assurance and maximize combat capability in contested domains. The DAF is using a public-private partnership agreement to maximize return on investment for a Blended Wing Body (BWB) demonstrator aircraft that seeks to increase efficiency by 30% and could offer solutions to multiple mission needs. I will explore technologies that enable agile combat employment concepts for expeditionary forces. I will strengthen the linkages between DAF offices and industry to promote innovative future capabilities that assure the delivery of energy to the warfighter.

The future expeditionary Air Force can achieve assured energy delivery through autonomous microgrids leveraging on-site resources, wireless power beaming via directed energy transmission, and standardized intelligent energy containers for rapid deployment and scalability. By embracing these innovative technologies, the Air Force can ensure energy availability for the warfighter, when and where it's needed.

109. What are your ideas for reducing the risk associated with the Air Force's dependence on vulnerable supply lines?

If confirmed, I will ensure appropriate emphasis is placed upon energy supportability, specifically by ensuring holistic analysis of campaign-level energy consumption and addressing expected supply chain risks. I will optimize fuel use by exploring the viability of alternative propulsion systems for legacy aircraft, increased performance through better mission planning and execution software, improved aerodynamics through drag reduction technologies, and engine sustainment technologies that maximize lethality per gallon.

The Air Force is focusing on three areas to reduce risk on potentially vulnerable supply lines. They are: 1. Posturing the force globally which includes bolstering agreements with allies and partners for critical capabilities and support; 2. Dispersing, posturing, and protecting pre-positioned stocks and equipment at strategic locations across the globe to reduce transportation timelines and enabling seamless transitions from peacetime to wartime operations; and 3. Reducing logistic demands through efficiencies, innovative technologies and manufacturing, and leveraging improved industrial capacity.

Information Operations

In 2019, the Air Force activated the 16th Air Force, the first information-warfare-focused numbered Air Force. This unit combines and consolidates cyber, electronic warfare, information operations and intelligence under a single command.

110. What is your understanding of how this Command is establishing or will establish units or teams that are responsible for providing integrated capabilities to support the information warfare needs of the combatant commands?

We owe combatant commanders organized, trained, and ready forces who effectively integrate the key tenants of Electromagnetic Warfare, Information Operations, Cyber, and intelligence. I stand with General Spain, Commander of ACC in prioritizing this effort, and I'm convicted that we have work to do. I am very familiar with our Information Warfare history from my previous role as commander of Air Combat Command. As lead MAJCOM, ACC has the task to standardize and baseline IW to create Mission Essential Tasks, identify capabilities, and project future force requirements. With the IW portfolio transferring from the headquarters A2 to the A3, we anticipate a renewed focus on IW capability for the Air Component, JFACC, and the Joint Force. If confirmed, we will thoroughly evaluate all options prior making further changes.

111. What specific structures and processes are being put in place in this Command specifically to integrate across the elements of Information Warfare?

The Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (A3) is now lead for Information Warfare efforts, ensuring alignment between operational capabilities and strategic priorities. This shift optimizes roles and responsibilities across the Air Force, enabling better coordination of policy, oversight, and guidance for organizing, training, and equipping Information Warfare forces.

112. From what source, if any, does this Command receive common requirements for joint forces and joint training to support joint information operations?

The OUSW (P) provides common requirements to the services to satisfy similar training and support structures such as instruction on the information Joint Function and shared competencies through the Strategy for Operations in the Information Environment and the subsequent implementation plan.

Cyber

The services have historically struggled to meet the needed readiness levels to support the Cyber Mission Forces (CMF) assigned to U.S. Cyber Command. This shortfall is due to several contributing factors to include but not limited to consecutive tours in the CMF as well as bonuses and incentives. The Air Force recently took a notable step in

remediating some of these challenges by re-establishing the Warrant Officer program and identifying cyber as the primary specialty.

113. What is your understanding of the causes of the Air Force's shortfalls in recruiting, training, and retaining personnel qualified for these work roles?

The Air Force currently doesn't have a recruiting shortfall for the above-mentioned career fields thanks to initiatives like direct accession. In fact, the Air Force grew accessions in the enlisted cyber operations career field by 79% since FY 22. However, we do have challenges in the training and retaining areas. Retention of both military (17S, 1B4, 1N4X1A, and 1D7), and civilian (2210) highly skilled cybersecurity personnel is suffering due to private sector competition offering higher pay and more flexible career options. For civilians, this is compounded by bureaucratic hiring processes, limited access to cutting-edge technology and training, and a lack of transparent career advancement. Inflexible assignments (particularly impacting military personnel), developmental gaps in training and placement, and operational burnout further exacerbate the problem. To combat this, the Air Force must leverage the Airmen's sense of purpose by providing clear career pathways, professional development opportunities, and non-monetary incentives that foster job satisfaction for both military and civilian employees. Efforts are also underway to refine training pipelines, aligning them more closely with operational needs.

114. What is your understanding of the Air Force's plans to correct this shortfall?

To address cybersecurity personnel shortfalls, the Air Force is implementing a multi-pronged strategy focused on financial incentives, career development, and training modernization. Financial incentives include Cyber Assignment Incentive Pay (CyAIP) of up to \$1,500 per month for critical roles, officer retention bonuses of \$25,000 per year with a 72% take rate (508 of 704 eligible officers), and Targeted Local Market Supplementals (TLMS) for civilian positions under Cyber Excepted Service (CES). The Air Force is also implementing consecutive operational tours to deepen expertise and improve team performance. A comprehensive review of cyberspace personnel ensures alignment of personnel, training, and mission roles. These efforts aim to attract, retain, and optimize the cyber workforce, ensuring they are trained, equipped, and motivated to defend national digital assets.

115. What role do you see the Cyber Warrant Officers, and, if confirmed, how will you work to grow this program?

Cyber Warrant Officers (17W/17Y) are critical to the Air Force's cyber force modernization, providing deep technical expertise, continuity, and mentorship in warfighter communications and cyber effects operations. They serve as subject matter experts, advise commanders, integrate cyber capabilities into warfighting functions, and

enhance combat effectiveness. As an example, Technical Sergeant Anderson, served as the technical expert for the Military Autonomic Logistics Information System (MALIS) for the 48th Communications Squadron. With his technical experience, Master's Degree in Information Systems and myriad of cybersecurity certifications he applied to Warrant Officer Training School. Following graduation, Warrant Officer Anderson took his technical expertise in developing techniques and procedures for the Air Force's F-35 Lightning II to the 388th Operations Support Squadron.

In addition Warrant Officers are architecting the Air Force's Zero Trust environment and leading offensive cyber operations in support of USSOUTHCOM objectives. To grow this program, the focus will be on cultural integration within operational units, building professional development tracks, continuous improvement based on feedback and data, and joint force alignment. This ensures the Warrant Officer program is institutionalized as a long-term pillar for retaining top cyber talent and maintaining a technically superior cyber force.

Several services are building tactical or organic cyber capabilities to include the Air Force with the Cyber Enabled Air Superiority (CEAS) concept. The CEAS concept, established in 2023, looked to establish teams associated primarily with flying units to provide operationally integrated cyber capabilities to the air component.

116. What is your view of the CEAS concept and its utility to the Air Force missions?

The Cyber Enabled Air Superiority (CEAS) mission represents a vital and evolving approach to ensuring the Air Force conducts its core missions with maximum lethality in a contested environment. Our enemies' technological advancements demand that we leverage every advantage, and CEAS offers a crucial means of integrating non-kinetic capabilities to enhance our air component's effectiveness. The 179th Cyberspace Wing (CW) of the Ohio Air National Guard (ANG) is at the forefront of delivering CEAS, providing tactical, non-kinetic effects teams to air component commanders. This presentation model enhances lethality and increases the survivability of our air forces across the competition continuum.

117. What role do you see it playing in supporting the Air Force missions in the future and what investments are needed to realize that role?

Looking ahead, I see the Cyber Enabled Air Superiority (CEAS) mission playing an increasingly critical role in supporting Air Force missions across the spectrum of conflict. As our adversaries continue to develop sophisticated capabilities, integrating CEAS into air component operations is essential for maintaining maximum lethality. To fully realize this potential, a balanced and strategic investment approach is required. The Air Force must continue to invest in the Airmen of the 179th Cyberspace Wing (CW) and their Regular Air Force counterparts, ensuring we have a lethal force to develop, deliver, and

employ these capabilities. This includes not only specialized training but also opportunities for joint and department level exercises. Furthermore, we must prioritize investments in science and technology to accelerate the development of innovative CEAS capabilities to outpace our adversaries' cyber advancements. Finally, the Air Force must invest in the maturation of the command-and-control orchestration required to closely team kinetic fires with the non-kinetic fires provided by CEAS. This is directly aligned with the Department's broader efforts to advance Combined Joint All-Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) and achieve decision advantage in a contested environment

Defense of Air Force networks, operational technologies, and weapons systems are also key to maximizing airpower. Programs such as Cyber Resiliency Office for Control Systems (CROCS) and Cyber Resiliency Office for Weapon Systems (CROWS) are critical to ensuring end-to-end protection, but they have struggled to receive priority investments.

118. In your view, what is the importance of these programs in the Air Force?

BLUF: The Air Force will aim to ensure that control systems and weapon systems can continue to function even under cyberattack, across the entire lifecycle, preventing adversaries from gaining an advantage through cyberattacks in which CROCS and CROWS are critically important.

The Cyber Resiliency Office for Control Systems (CROCS) and Cyber Resiliency Office for Weapon Systems (CROWS) programs are critically important to the Air Force for several reasons:

Maximizing Airpower: Defending networks, operational technologies, and weapon systems is key to maximizing airpower. Without robust cybersecurity, these systems are vulnerable to attack, disruption, and manipulation, which could severely limit the Air Force's ability to project power effectively.

Ensuring Operational Readiness: CROCS and CROWS aim to ensure that control systems and weapon systems can continue to function even under cyberattack. This is essential for maintaining operational readiness and the ability to respond to threats when needed.

Protecting Critical Infrastructure: Control systems manage critical infrastructure, such as power grids, communication networks, and logistics systems. CROCS helps to secure these systems against cyberattacks that could have cascading effects on Air Force operations and national security.

Safeguarding Weapon Systems: CROWS focuses on protecting weapon systems from cyber threats that could compromise their functionality, accuracy, or safety. This is vital for maintaining the effectiveness of the Air Force's arsenal and preventing adversaries from gaining an advantage through cyberattacks.

End-to-End Protection: Both CROCS and CROWS are designed to provide end-to-end protection, meaning they address vulnerabilities across the entire lifecycle of control systems and weapon systems, from design and development to deployment and maintenance. This comprehensive approach is necessary to defend against increasingly sophisticated cyber threats.

Maintaining Strategic Advantage: In an era of increasing cyber warfare, the ability to protect its networks, control systems, and weapon systems is a key strategic advantage for the Air Force. CROCS and CROWS help to ensure that the Air Force maintains this advantage by reducing its vulnerability to cyberattacks.

119. If confirmed, how do you plan to balance investments in growing these programs with those investments needed to advance air systems?

The Air Force will prioritize investments based on risk assessments and criticality, embedding "secure by design" principles early in air system development, and utilizing data-driven decision-making with clear performance metrics and scenario-based planning. The Air Force must systematically assess the criticality and allocate resources to address the most likely and most damaging cyber risks first. Integrating cybersecurity early in the development lifecycle of new air systems and building security features in from the ground up are more cost-effective than bolting them on as an afterthought. Clear metrics are necessary to measure the effectiveness of cybersecurity investments. Also, scenario/exercises will help evaluate the potential impact of different cyberattacks on air systems to identify critical vulnerabilities and help prioritize investments in defenses. The Air Force must continue to invest in developing and retaining a skilled cybersecurity workforce and collaborate with industry partners to leverage advanced cybersecurity solutions.

120. What guidance will you provide to base and wing commanders, if confirmed, on base-level investments in these programs?

BLUF: Homeland Defense is critically dependent on protecting and defending critical infrastructure within the base fence line and outside the fence line. Commanders must invest in protecting their critical infrastructure and understanding dependencies outside the fence line (such as power production, water, fuel, etc) to minimize risk to their base mission.

Communicate the Importance: Emphasize that investments in CROCS and CROWS are not just IT expenses, but critical components of mission readiness and national security. Clearly articulate that securing control systems and weapon systems is vital part of their mission.

Tailored Threat Briefings: Commanders should incorporate tailored threat briefings specific to their base's mission to fully understand the threats and risks to their mission and how local investments contribute to securing control systems and weapon systems at their base.

Leveraging these programs to meet NDAA directives and in conjunction with Mission Assurance and cyber defense initiatives such as mission mapping and network monitoring is imperative to understanding and defending critical cyber terrain for mission success.

Electronic Warfare (EW)

121. What is your vision for the future of Air Force EW capabilities?

To maintain our competitive edge in a rapidly evolving threat landscape, the Air Force must proactively embrace a forward-leaning vision for Electromagnetic Warfare (EW) and elevate our focus on the broader Electromagnetic Spectrum (EMS) through the lens of Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (EMSO). This necessitates a significant shift towards distributed, software-defined systems and capabilities characterized by agility and the increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. Specifically, the future of Air Force EW capabilities must shift the focus to offensive Electronic Attack (EA) while allocating resources for dedicated expertise development, intelligence functions, EMS C2 tools and infrastructure development, agile spectrum dependent systems delivery, EMS hardened systems delivery, and critical sustainment function enhancements. Resources must no longer solely focus on defensive EA or self-protect (SP) capabilities. Offensive EA must be distributed and collaborative. This transition will empower us to achieve cognitive EW capabilities that enable dynamic updates at tactically relevant speeds, outpacing traditional acquisition timelines and ensuring we maintain a decisive advantage against adversaries employing increasingly sophisticated systems.

Realizing this vision requires a commitment to exploring, developing, and producing groundbreaking concepts and doctrine that transcend traditional electronic warfare principles and fully embrace Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (EMSO) – the vital synergy of traditional EW with robust Spectrum Management. Our existing Campaign Teams will be pivotal in driving the capability development efforts necessary to achieve this transformative vision in support of the Joint Force.

122. How does electronic warfare play a role in the Air Force's Operational Imperatives and with respect to near peer adversaries?

Electromagnetic Warfare (EW) is vital to the Department of the Air Force and is a core component of our Campaign Teams, no longer Operational Imperatives, designed to combat near-peer adversaries across all phases of conflict within the multi-domain environment, where the Electromagnetic Spectrum (EMS) serves as the critical connective tissue. Securing our assured access to the EMS, while simultaneously denying our adversaries that same freedom of action, is essential for prevailing in any phase of military operations, particularly in deterring or shaping conflict.

Electromagnetic spectrum dominance translates directly into freedom of operation across the land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace domains. It is fundamental to protecting our Joint

and partner forces and enables our ability to detect, deny, degrade, deceive, and ultimately destroy adversary sensors and emitters. The USAF and USSF investments in EW are strategically focused on distributed, software-defined systems and capabilities, fostering agility and increasingly leveraging the power of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. By developing these more robust, adaptive, and cognitive electronic warfare capabilities, coupled with innovative concepts and doctrine, we will empower the Joint Force to effectively maneuver and decisively succeed within all domains. Our commitment to EW is a commitment to dominance and decisive victory.

123. What is your assessment of the adequacy and efficacy of EW training that Air Force personnel receive in an Air Force environment in specific airframes? In a joint environment with other Military Services?

Success in any future conflict hinges on our ability to dominate the electromagnetic spectrum. We must, therefore, significantly enhance our training focus on operating in contested and congested EMS environments, integrating Electronic Warfare and Spectrum Management into a cohesive strategy of Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations. This requires us to expand our training to encompass the full breadth of the EMS, recognizing that advanced technology has broadened the spectrum available to both our forces and our adversaries. The USAF Headquarters staff is the lead agent to ensure training must be equally rigorous in both offensive EMS capabilities, designed to counter adversary actions, and defensive EMS measures, while ensuring our forces maintain unfettered freedom of action within the EMS.

Recognizing that these challenges are shared across the Joint Force and our Coalition Partners, we must cultivate deeper integration in our daily training and exercises, leveraging improved live and virtual training environments. A collaborative, joint training approach is essential to our collective success.

124. What is your understanding of the difference in DOTMLPF between electronic warfare and cyber?

In today's warfare, dominance in the electromagnetic spectrum is paramount, providing a decisive tactical, operational, and strategic advantage. Our platforms, weapon systems, and kill chains are fundamentally reliant on the EMS, a reliance increasingly challenged by our competitors. While both Electromagnetic Warfare and Cyber operate in and through the EMS, they serve distinct purposes, with unique requirements and authorities. We are committed to ensuring the lethality of both functions through comprehensive DOTMLPF investments focused on our Airmen, their training, and the tools they require.

Although developed along separate paths to address these unique needs, we recognize the critical importance of cross-domain awareness. To that end, the recent USAF Headquarters reorganization included merging Cyber and EW into a single directorate, fostering greater collaboration and a shared understanding at the tactical level. This synergy is crucial as EMSO remains focused on exploiting, attacking, protecting, and managing radiated or conducted electromagnetic emissions while Cyberspace Operations

(CO) focus on exploiting, attacking, and defending the global cyber domain that consists of networks of information technology infrastructures and data, many of which use the EMS. Our merged structure allows us to optimize our capabilities across both domains, ensuring we maintain a competitive edge.

125. Please explain the importance of the 350th spectrum warfare wing to the Air Force and the Joint Force?

The 350th Spectrum Warfare Wing (SWW) is a critical asset to the Joint Force and our allies, providing the asymmetric advantage we need to outpace our adversaries within the electromagnetic spectrum. The Wing's vital contributions – rapid reprogramming, advanced target and waveform development, and rigorous assessment of our EW capabilities – are essential to maintaining our competitive edge.

As the Air Force's sole entity responsible for developing target and waveform capabilities against evolving EW threats, the 350 SWW manages the classified databases and tools required to rapidly reprogram over 70 platforms and ensure that 27 partner nations remain current on the latest threats. Furthermore, and of utmost importance to our coalition warfighting capability, the SWW is responsible for ensuring that every F-35 worldwide has access to the most current EW information, maximizing the lethality of this critical platform. The 350th SWW's mission is fundamental to our ability to project power and deter aggression in an increasingly contested environment.

126. What is your assessment of the electronic protection capabilities of Air Force systems in relation to the offensive electronic warfare threat from peer and near-peer adversaries, especially in light of the Northern Edge exercises?

The Air Force is working to rebuild its EMS warfighter culture and awareness of EMS operational significance by reinvigorating education through assessments of current programs and development general EMSO knowledge across the USAF. In addition, the Air Force is working towards a holistic EMS investment strategy to include electromagnetic protection. Of note, DAF assets were providing the tailored Offensive EA as “Red Force” players, driving the noted Northern Edge exercise EP highlights. The platforms that experienced the degradation in the Northern Edge exercise are also taking lessons learned to improve their EP. Note, this question relates to a previous year’s Exercise Northern Edge.

Spectrum

127. Electromagnetic spectrum plays a critical role in many DOW missions. In what ways does the Air Force rely on spectrum to support warfighter requirements?

Air Force effectiveness depends on assured access to the electromagnetic spectrum. Every mission set—command and control, ISR, precision strike, cyber, and space—relies on it. Without spectrum, we lose the ability to sense, communicate, maneuver, and deliver effects, putting deterrence and victory at risk. Dominance in any domain begins with dominance in the EMS

But that dominance is increasingly contested. Commercial 5G expansion and rapid advances in data and weapons technology are constraining freedom of action. To stay ahead, the Air Force must shift to proactive spectrum management, field innovative technologies, and enhanced integration across all warfighting domains. Battlefield advantage now and in the future, is directly tied to its ability to effectively battle manage in the spectrum.

128. In your view, which warfighter spectrum requirements will be essential to competing with China on a future battlefield?

On a future battlefield with China, warfighters will need three spectrum capabilities: resilient command and control to connect distributed forces, spectrum maneuver to operate in a contested electromagnetic environment, and electromagnetic warfare to disrupt and deny the adversary. Together, those deliver decision advantage.

129. What Air Force systems might be affected by forcing to vacate, accommodating low power non-military systems, or share the portion of the spectrum between 3.1-3.45GHz and 7.4-8.4GHz loss of “S-band”, in your view?

Loss or sharing of these portions of the spectrum affects core Air Force systems—airborne and missile defense radars, satellite command and control, and MILSATCOM links. These systems provide early warning and secure communications that underwrite national survival. Without them, the President’s decision space in the event of an attack is reduced, putting deterrence, survivability, and decision advantage at risk. I can provide you a complete listing and further details in a closed session.

130. Were DOW required to vacate these portions of the spectrum, what would be the potential operational and monetary costs to the Air Force, in your view?

NOTE: in a 9/29/25 meeting between Gen Wilsbach and A39S, the general referenced ADM Caudle’s CNO testimony (100 years / infinity dollars) and asked if he could say something to that effect.

I agree with and echo the concerns of recently confirmed Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Caudle, where he warned the cost to vacate these bands could effectively be ‘infinity.’ For the Air Force, returning or replacing our systems would take decades, cost potentially hundreds of billions, and may not be possible without losing capability, because the technology doesn’t exist today. These bands are also where China operates and lobbies for the US to vacate; if we don’t have the ability to test and validate weapons systems and tactics, and train to the adversary’s capabilities, we cede advantage to the adversary.

131. How long would it take for the Air Force to move its systems to a different area of the spectrum, in your view?

NOTE: in a 9/29/25 meeting between Gen Wilsbach and A39S, the general referenced ADM Caudle's CNO testimony (100 years / infinity dollars) and asked if he could say something to that effect.

Realistically, it would take decades, if it's even possible. Our systems are engineered for very specific bands based on the inherent physics of those frequencies. Retuning or redesigning them would not only cost hundreds of billions, but in many cases the technology to shift without losing capability simply does not exist. As ADM Caudle told this committee, you're looking at a 100-year project. For the Air Force, I would say the same, the timeline is generational, not programmatic

132. What investments, in your view, are needed to adopt and implement dynamic spectrum sharing technologies and how much time would be required to operationalize these technologies?

To make dynamic spectrum sharing real, we need four things: first, investment in advanced tech like AI-driven spectrum management, adaptive antennas, and cognitive radios to enable intelligent, real-time access; second, national testbeds to validate coexistence and realistically test against adversary systems; third, secure access protocols, trusted data-sharing standards, and a skilled workforce trained in electromagnetic battle management; and fourth modernized policy and regulatory frameworks that guarantee the Joint Force retains priority access in conflict. With sustained investment, we're talking a decade or more to scale across the force.

133. Based on your understanding of the objectives of the Golden Dome for America initiative, how, in your view, would a decision to compel the Air Force to vacate or share spectrum affect the Service's ability to support the development and deployment of a comprehensive missile and aircraft detection, tracking, and engagement architecture?

If the Air Force cedes the air domain or loses spectrum access, we risk our service's very existence, the Joint Force fails, and the Golden Dome for America fails with it. We cannot allow China or any adversary to operate with impunity in any one domain, whether the air, sea, space or the electromagnetic spectrum.

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. DOW has identified 14 critical technology areas in which investment to develop next generation operational capabilities is imperative: 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; renewable energy generation and storage; advanced computing and software; human-machine interfaces; and biotechnology. Much of the innovation in these technologies that could prove suitable for national defense purposes is occurring outside of the traditional defense industry.

Science, Technology, and Innovation

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134. What do you see as the most significant challenges (e.g., technical, organizational, or cultural) to U.S. development of these key technologies, or gaining access to such technologies from the commercial marketplace?

The most significant challenge we face is that our adversaries are investing heavily in these critical technologies and are out pacing us in many areas. We must not only radically accelerate our innovation pipeline from basic research to fielded capability, but do so at a speed that keeps us ahead. I support efforts to integrate these technologies into our existing weapon systems and rapidly develop programs that can bring these technologies into new Department of the Air Force capabilities. To do this we need to foster a culture of innovation that quickly gets prototypes to the field where warfighter feedback can accelerate their development. The Air Force must also identify and field commercially available technologies outside the traditional industrial base that can be rapidly deployed. If confirmed, I will champion a unified effort across our technical, operational, and acquisition communities to swiftly provide our warfighters with the cutting-edge capabilities they need to maintain Air Force dominance.

135. How well do you think those Department investments in these technologies are appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all Military Departments and Agencies?

The Office of the Under Secretary of War (OUSW) for Research and Engineering is responsible for overseeing the coordination on these critical technologies between Services. It is vital for the Air Force to maintain our close working relationship with OUSW to ensure strong collaboration and that we take advantage of the lessons from our sister services as we collectively move to integrate and field these new technologies. Two examples of cross service partnership include our collaboration with the Army on experimentation and prototyping of hypervelocity projectile (HVP) capabilities as well as our recent support to the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) 401 tasked accelerate the development, acquisition, and deployment of counter-unmanned aerial systems (C-sUAS)

capabilities to counter drone threats. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Air Force collaborates across services to share data and information across the Department of War to accelerate innovation and technology transition.

136. In your view, how has the Air Force prioritized limited research and development funding across its technology focus areas? Specifically, where is the Air Force either increasing or decreasing focus and funding?

The Air Force recognizes the importance of both addressing immediate operational requirements and investing in groundbreaking technologies that will provide a decisive advantage in the future. We are not only making investments to improve existing systems that plug capability gaps but we are also supporting transformative technologies that could significantly alter the future of warfare. Increased areas of investment include collaborative combat aircraft; networked weapons; hypersonics; autonomous integrated Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance; and artificial intelligence. I am committed to translating innovative ideas into tangible warfighting capabilities by empowering collaborative teams of warfighters, acquisition specialists, and technologists to rapidly address real-world operational challenges.

137. In your view, how is the Air Force balancing revolutionary capability advancements as compared to “quick win” incremental improvements that can be rapidly fielded?

The best tool we have at our disposal to balance revolutionary capabilities and incremental improvements is early engagement with the warfighter. Getting them prototypes of the tools we are developing can reveal applications that we would have never seen if the technology was kept sequestered in a laboratory. The warfighter can also deliver feedback to let us know if the incremental improvements we are developing enhance their lethality or get in their way. One example is Project Arc which embeds uniformed scientists and engineers on temporary duty status into operation wings to provide early exposure to emerging technologies. We need our technologists to work with our COCOMS, MAJCOMS, and PEOs to rapidly develop and deploy prototypes and experiments to mature technology across the spectrum of requirements while also proving what is in the realm of the possible. If confirmed, I will champion a capability development approach centered on the warfighter, fostering collaboration between technologists, operators, and acquirers to accelerate the delivery of both innovative, quick-win solutions and revolutionary advancements that ensure air dominance.

138. What efforts is the Air Force making to identify new technologies developed commercially by the private sector and apply them to military and national security purposes? What are the challenges that you perceive to increasing collaboration between the private sector and Air Force?

The Air Force is working to accelerate the delivery of agile and affordable capabilities by connecting innovative technology developers with our Airmen through AFWERX, Air Force Ventures, and our collaborations with the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU). We have

recently facilitated partnerships in this capacity looking at small UAS and affordable mass missile capabilities. The most significant challenge to greater collaboration with industry is how to connect the new companies developing disruptive innovations with our Air Force Science and Technology enterprise. If we focus only on our traditional industrial base and technologies that improve what we already have, we will miss the technologies that will determine the outcome of future conflicts. To be successful the Air Force must reach out to non-traditional vendors that may not be aware of all the opportunities for investment we offer. Embracing disruption requires aligning not only investments with industry but also increasing our risk tolerance.

139. If confirmed, 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 DOW research and engineering community and the private sector?

Regular, working-level interactions between the scientists and engineers building the new tools and the operators employing them are fundamental to ensuring continued integration and alignment. The Air Force has made significant improvement in integrating the warfighter into our research and development processes through the WARfighter TECHnology (WARTECH) process. WARTECH pairs warfighters with technologists to enable near-term game-changing capability demonstrations. Recent examples include the pursuit of enhanced ISR technologies providing enhanced situational awareness as well as enhanced air-to-air refueling through air refueling battle management and automated air-to-air refueling. If confirmed, I will prioritize efforts to integrate warfighter feedback into all stages of the R&D process, from initial concept development to engagement with commercial partners.

140. If confirmed, how are you leveraging experimentation and prototyping opportunities to look at new technologies and concepts that might be beneficial for the Air Force, or better support the Air Force role in joint operations?

The Air Force has been innovative in adopting new approaches to how we conduct experimentation and prototyping. Through AFWERX Spark, we are enabling bottom up innovation where our Airman operators are given access to the training, tools, equipment, and resources through local base Spark Cells and going forward, our deployable Combat Labs, to enable them to bring their ingenuity to bare to rapidly solve the tough problems in front of them. We also embed Airman innovators in operational units through Project Arc, provide funding for grassroots innovation, and highlight some of the ideas and prototypes with the most potential impact through our annual Spark Tank competition. where Airmen and Guardians pitch innovative ideas to the top Department of the Air Force leadership and a panel of industry experts. The Air Force also collaborates with OSW in joint experimentation venues to include OUSW(R&E)'s Technology Readiness Experimentation (T-REX) event where we've demonstrated many technologies to include counter-ISR capabilities. If confirmed, I will support continued efforts to get technology into the hand of the warfighter early to strengthen the joint force.

141. In your view, what steps must DOW take to protect and strengthen our National Security Innovation Base to ensure that critical information is protected?

The Department of the Air Force and the DoW are working diligently to protect our National Security Innovation Base. First, we must accurately identify the critical technologies that enable innovation dominance. This can only be achieved through strong collaboration across the government and with our industry partners. We must identify all the places this information must be disseminated and establish Mandatory Protection Measures that guarantee its safety throughout its lifecycle. Finally, we must ensure that, as we work to expand and reinvigorate the industrial base, that we apply a new Due Diligence process to ensure that new firms adequately safeguard Critical Programs and Technologies. Through these partnerships, we enable enterprise-wide, enduring protection for our critical information. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure that key technology and information is protected throughout its lifecycle.

One of the main objectives of the defense research enterprise is to develop advanced technologies that will be of benefit to the warfighter. In this regard, it is critical that advancements quickly transition from the development phase into testing and evaluation and ultimately into a program of record for the deployment of capability to the warfighter.

142. If confirmed, how would you ensure that a greater percentage of the technologies being developed by Air Force labs transition into programs of record for deployment to the warfighter? How would you ensure that appropriate technologies are transitioning more quickly into programs of record?

If confirmed, I will prioritize accelerating the transition of promising technologies from our labs into programs of record. WARTECH and Vanguard initiatives have brought in operator involvement early in the technology maturation process. As we seek to increase this rate of transition, we must also balance warfighter “pull” and technology “push” in our S&T investment portfolio to ensure that the labs remain a center of disruptive innovation. The Air Force has demonstrated that leveraging a mission focused Integrated Product Team (IPT) model within the Air Force Research Laboratory balances giving the warfighter the technology that they request while also rapidly maturing the technologies that will transform the way we fight. We’ve used this model to look at long range kill webs, counter-targeting, protect and defend space, and nuclear S&T. These IPTs are accelerating the rate of technology transition as they leverage cross functional talent from across the Labs and align efforts ensuring that the team is working toward these mission priorities. We are also working with acquisition program offices to better design for integration as new technologies come available to close DAF capability gaps.

143. How do you see the laboratory facilities in the Air Force contributing to your goals for developing technology for the warfighter? Do you think Air Force lab facilities are keeping pace with the needs of the Air Force? If not, what do you think could be done to improve the Air Force’s ability to modernize its lab infrastructure?

The greatest strength of the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) is its world class workforce that develops key enabling technologies for future strategic, operational, and tactical systems. To be successful this workforce needs world-class facilities but maintaining modern facilities is a persistent challenge due to limited military construction resources. To mitigate this, AFRL is aggressively leveraging innovative agreements like Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA), Educational Partnership Agreement (EPA), and Partnership Intermediary Agreement (PIA), to extend its reach and outreach and gain access to world class talent and facilities. In today's rapidly evolving security environment, we must innovate and field capabilities because our airmen's lives depend on it. This has been operationally demonstrated from Ukraine's recent successes in demonstrating the power of rapidly iterating and deploying innovative solutions in the face of an aggressive adversary. Using these lessons learned from Ukraine, we are also approaching it from the bottom up deploying lab and manufacturing capabilities to our Airman operators through Spark Cells at the Wing, Group, Squadron level and deployable Combat Labs so they can rapidly innovate to respond to the challenges they are facing real time in the field. If confirmed, I will continue to support AFRL's ability to organically, and through partnerships develop, test, and deliver next generation warfighting capabilities.

Technical Workforce

A significant challenge facing the Air Force today is a shortage of highly skilled data scientists; computer programmers; cyber operators; and other scientific, technical, and engineering talent to work at Defense laboratories and technical centers.

144. In your view, what are the pros and cons of having Air Force active-duty military personnel trained and working as scientists, engineers, software coders, and in other technical positions across the Air Force's research, development, and acquisition enterprise?

The Air Force must have an appropriate and cost-effective mix of military and civilian personnel as well as contracted services to achieve its mission. If confirmed, I will explore the existing mix with the technical areas aforementioned to ensure we have the appropriate workforce that is charged with being at the forefront of science, engineering and technology breakthroughs.

The Air Force requires technology to access its primary warfighting domain - the air - and therefore needs a combination of both active duty and civilian personnel trained and working as scientists, engineers, software coders, and in other technical positions across the Air Force's research, development, and acquisition enterprise. Providing the Air Force with an organic STEM capability is a critical enabler for the successful management of technology-heavy efforts such as B-21, Sentinel, and F-47. Our service has a deep history of Airmen like General Doolittle and General Schriever capitalizing on their technical expertise and warfighting experiences to offer essential insights into operational challenges. Additionally, the rotation of active-duty Airmen throughout their

careers brings fresh perspectives, new ideas and a willingness to challenge the status quo in the pursuit of constant improvement. Active-duty personnel can lack the deep technical expertise of their civilian counterparts, but their strength is in their breadth and agility to be able to execute technical innovation and adaptation at the edge. It is imperative that we maintain a mix of personnel and employment models to ensure the Air Force has access to the talent it needs to discover, develop, deliver, and adapt technology for combat operations at the speed of modern war. If confirmed, I will leverage all the talent management tools at my disposal to ensure we recruit and retain the talent we need to meet the Air Force's evolving technological challenges.

145. How do you propose to leverage other initiatives in the Air Force or in DOW to help with these challenges, such as the Defense Civilian Training Corps?

If confirmed, I'll review Air Force initiatives to attract STEM talent to support research and development; the acquisition enterprises; and operations to ensure we retain our technological edge. I'll focus on reducing hurdles to hiring and cultivate a 21st-century workforce using tools such as partnerships, outreach and scholarships.

Suicide Prevention

In 2023, the Department of War released the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC) report which included recommendations to the Department to improve quality of life, aid in building healthy climates and cultures, and better address stigma as a barrier to help-seeking, amongst other things.

146. If confirmed, what specific role and tasks would you establish for the Air Force in implementing the SPRIRC's recommendations?

Airmen and their families are our greatest asset, and one unnecessary loss is one too many. If confirmed, I will work to provide a safe work and home environment for Airmen, and I will continue the initiatives such as Lethal Means Safety and limited Privilege suicide prevention programs. I will support our prevention workforce so they can continue to innovate and revolutionize suicide prevention.

147. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to ensure that sufficient suicide prevention and mental health resources are available to deployed airmen, as well as to airmen and their families at home station?

Today, families and airmen at home station locations have resources provided by their Military Treatment Facilities and TRICARE networks, in addition to MilitaryOneSource, Military and Family Life Consultants, outside agencies (like the Cohen Veteran's Network), Primary Care Behavioral Health Providers, Primary Care providers and chaplains. If confirmed, I will continue to support efforts to provide resources like these to all Airmen – deployed or at home station - and family members. In addition, I will support access to basic mental health awareness and support. Finally, I will review our

policies related to medical and mental health care to encourage individuals to seek care by minimizing the risk for negative career impact.

Military Health System (MHS) Reform

Section 702 of the NDAA for FY 2017, as modified by Sections 711 and 712 of the NDAA for FY 2019, and sections 711 and 712 of the NDAA for FY 2020, transferred the administration and management of military treatment facilities (MTFs) from the Military Services to the Defense Health Agency (DHA).

148. Do you support the implementation of the MHS reforms mandated by the NDAAs for FYs 2017, 2019, and 2020?

Yes, I support the direction of Congress to standardize the administration and management of the MTFs under the Defense Health Agency (DHA). Additional work needs to be done to define the DHA's role as a combat support agency to ensure we do not sacrifice wartime medical capabilities for peacetime healthcare support. There have been many challenges based on the disparate organization of each of the Services and Service specific needs. DAF follows NDAA 20, sec.712 by keeping 80% of AD medics assigned within MTFs. With AFMEDCOM IOC established on 17 March 2025, the DAF is better postured to continue supporting DHA and medical groups located on AF installations to prioritize medically ready forces and medical force readiness. I remain concerned with the low proportion of civilian medics reducing access to care when uniformed medics train, exercise, or deploy. If confirmed, I will explore alternatives to provide world-class care to AD and family members.

149. In your view, is the Air Force medical force properly sized to meet the joint medical requirements set forth in operational plans implementing the NDS?

Yes, the AFMS is properly sized to meet joint medical requirements, primarily Role 3 care, patient movement, and immediate response medical forces. However, after prioritizing operational requirements, the AFMS is insufficiently sized to continue in-garrison health care delivery. Specifically, the AFMS needs additional civilians in-garrison; both primary and specialty care services in the event of the execution of operational plans.

150. In your view, do Air Force medical providers today possess the critical wartime medical readiness skills and core competencies required to provide effective and timely health care to military personnel engaged in combat or contingency operations?

Yes, Air Force medical providers possess the critical wartime medical readiness

skills and core competencies required to provide effective and timely health care to military personnel engaged in combat or contingency operations. Maintaining currency in these skills is an ongoing challenge due to our younger and healthier patient population. We continue to leverage Training and Affiliation Agreements (TAAs) and Off-Duty Employment (ODE) to maintain clinical currency as needed. Select Air Force providers assigned to Special Operations Forces (SOF), combat, and mobility medical capabilities can deliver a range of expeditionary medical skills at the point of injury, during patient movement, and at each echelon of care. Finally, providers assigned to a limited number of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear response capabilities are organized, trained, and equipped to detect, identify, respond, and treat mixed conventional and CBRN injuries. Ongoing exposure to patient care environments with opportunities to maintain clinical readiness skills is an imperative element of their in-garrison mission

Air Force Military End Strength

Over the last 20 years, the Air Force has experienced near-constant flux in its end strength, from a high of 357,900 airmen in 2005 to a low of 312,980 airmen in 2015. The President's budget has requested an end strength of 324,700 for fiscal year 2024.

151. In your assessment, what is the effect on the force of these frequent end strength fluctuations?

End-strength fluctuations are an ongoing reality as the Air Force adapts to emerging threats, modernization priorities, and fiscal limitations. While necessary at times, these fluctuations can strain our ability to attract, train, and retain highly qualified Airmen, impacting readiness, morale, and long-term talent management.

Frequent shifts in authorized end strength disrupt career trajectories, making promotion opportunities unpredictable and retention more challenging, particularly for experienced and technically skilled personnel. Gradual, phased-in changes to end strength are essential to preserving institutional knowledge, maintaining operational continuity, and sustaining morale. Stable end strength supports deliberate force development, enabling consistent training throughput, aligning career progression with mission needs, and ensuring Airmen see a future in the service.

Stabilizing and gradually growing the force will enhance the Air Force's capability, lethality, and ability to meet operational demands in an increasingly complex security environment.

While sometimes necessary, these fluctuations can have significant implications for readiness, morale, and long-term talent management.

The Department of the Air Force remains committed to enabling Airmen to build meaningful and rewarding careers, whether on active duty, in the Air National Guard or Air Force Reserve.

However, frequent shifts in authorized end strength can disrupt that trajectory. When promotion opportunities become unpredictable or advancement pathways are unclear, retention suffers, particularly among our most experienced and technically skilled personnel.

We understand that end strength adjustments are often driven by evolving threats, modernization priorities, and fiscal realities. That said, we advocate for gradual, phased-in changes wherever possible. This approach allows us to manage transitions more effectively, on-ramping and off-ramping personnel in a way that preserves institutional knowledge, maintains operational continuity, and sustains morale.

Stable end strength also supports deliberate force development. It enables us to plan for consistent training throughput, align career progression with mission needs, and ensure that our Airmen see a future in the service. Predictability in force structure translates directly into retention of our most capable warfighters.

In short, while end strength fluctuations are sometimes unavoidable, their impact can be mitigated through thoughtful planning, transparent communication, and a commitment to preserving the integrity of our talent pipeline.

152. In your view, is the Air Force's current end strength sufficient to implement the 2025 INDSG and execute the associated operational plans? If not, what end strength do you believe is necessary to meet the demands placed on the Air Force by the INDSG and associated operational plans?

Current end strength supports existing missions, but as we modernize to meet the 2025 National Defense Strategy, additional manpower will likely be required. Analyses indicate roughly 350,000 Active Component Airmen are needed to meet strategic demands. Achieving full end strength would enhance readiness, sustain emerging missions such as Combat Units of Action, the F-47, and Golden Dome, and ensure the Air Force can respond rapidly and effectively to global threats. If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress, the Secretary of the Air Force, and the Secretary of War to assess the appropriate force size needed to implement the INDSG and operational plans, ensuring adjustments are informed by changes in strategy and resource levels.

153. What additional force shaping authorities and tools does the Air Force need, in your view?

From my perspective, the Air Force currently has the necessary force-shaping tools. However, I will continue to work with Congress and SecAF/ SecWar to ensure the Air Force remains agile and responsive regarding the size and skill mix we need in the Air Force.

Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve

154. What is your vision of the roles and missions of the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve?

The Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard are foundational and valued members of the Total Air Force, whose roles and missions are driven by National Defense Strategy and aligned with Air Force core functions. They provide combat-ready operational capability both overseas and domestically, serving as cost-efficient and mission-effective force multipliers for global reach and strategic deterrence, maximizing the "fight-tonight" capacity while leveraging civilian skills. In addition to combat capability, the Air Force Reserve provides unique capabilities such as aerial spray, weather reconnaissance, aerial firefighting, and the majority of aeromedical evacuation supporting the homeland at the federal, state, and local level.

The appropriate relationship between the Active Air Force, the Air National Guard, and the Air Force Reserve is one of robust interoperability. The Air National Guard is the nation's indispensable combat-ready air reserve. The Air Force Reserve provides immense strategic depth and operational capacity as a reserve component to active duty. Seamless integration across the components enhances overall mission capability and readiness of the Total Force. The Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves are, along with a properly configured regular Air Force, the cost-effective solution for an uncertain future. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of the Air Force to evaluate and understand the current dynamics of this relationship. This will enable me to identify the best approaches to leverage the unique structure and strengths of each component.

155. If confirmed, what objectives would you seek to achieve with respect to the organization, end strength, and force structure of the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve?

The objective for the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard would be to enhance their role as a cost-efficient, mission-effective force providing combat-ready operational capability to enable rapid mobilization and effective projection of airpower in response to strategic threats. This includes ensuring concurrent and proportional recapitalization and modernization across Reserve components for effective Total Force optimization, leveraging their access to needed skills in both flying and non-flying missions, and aligning their diverse operational capabilities with Combatant Commander requirements.

As a cost-efficient and mission-effective force, the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve provide the nation with combat-ready operational capability overseas and here at home. A strong Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve are vital for homeland defense, global reach, and integrated deterrence, enabling the Total Force to maximize fight-tonight capacity. The Air Reserve Component also offers the opportunity for ready access with much-needed skills like cyber and contingency response, as they maintain many relevant skills through their civilian jobs. The Air Reserve Component's wide-ranging operational capability serves the diverse needs of every Combatant Commander, whose requirements are as varied as the geographic and functional areas they support.

Concurrent and appropriate recapitalization and modernization across both the Regular and Reserve Components is crucial to optimize the Total Force.

156. What are your views as to the optimal role for Air Force Reserve Component forces in meeting Air Force combat mission requirements?

The optimal role for Air Reserve Component forces in meeting Air Force combat mission requirements is that of a cost-effective force multiplier, providing strategic depth and operational capacity across all mission sets, domains, and capabilities within the Total Force. Readiness remains the Air Force's top priority, across all components. If confirmed, my objectives would continue to align accordingly, ensuring an integrated, Total Force approach to organizing, training, and equipping Airmen.

The Air Reserve Component is a force multiplier providing strategic depth and operational capacity across all mission sets, domains, and capabilities of the Total Force, including supporting combat missions. Readiness remains the Air Force's top priority across all components. If confirmed, my objectives would continue to align accordingly, ensuring an integrated, Total Force approach to organizing, training, and equipping Airmen.

157. In your view, do the Air Force Reserve Components serve as an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or both? In light of your answer, should the Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard be supported by improved equipment, increased training, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?

The Air Force Reserve Components serve as both an operational and strategic reserve, providing surge capacity and strategic depth at a fraction of the cost. The Reserve provides daily capacity for training, operations, and combatant commander requirements, while also serving as a strategic reserve that delivers surge capacity for the joint force when required. Both roles are critical for meeting wartime and competition requirements outlined in the Interim National Defense Strategy. Therefore, the Reserve Component must be resourced appropriately to maintain readiness and lethality, ensuring successful execution of the Total Force mission. Concurrent and proportional recapitalization and modernization are essential to maintaining combat effectiveness, deterring aggression, and achieving equipment parity, especially as the Reserve Component's fleet consists primarily of legacy aircraft averaging 30-40 years in age.

We need the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard to maintain their indispensable role as both a strategic reserve, providing additional surge capacity to the joint force when called upon, and an operational reserve, providing daily capacity to support on-going operations and training. Both roles are critical to meet wartime and competition requirements set forth in the National Defense Strategy. The Air Reserve Component must be resourced appropriately to maintain readiness and lethality, ensuring successful execution of the Total Force mission.

158. What is your understanding and view of the Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness proposal for comprehensive Reserve Component Duty Status Reform?

Just as the military modernizes our weapons systems, we must modernize our organization and not continue to operate under authorities established decades ago. Currently, Reservists conducting training or supporting operations are placed in one of approximately ~30 unique statutory authorities. Duty Status Reform legislation is needed to streamline and consolidate today's overly complex system and eliminate longstanding pay and benefits inequities.

Duty Status Reform should be designed to: correct pay inequalities, align entitlements across duty categories, and clarify the entitlements for Reservists who transition between statuses. Duty Status Reform will simplify the rules and procedures associated with Reserve support to operational missions, ensure AFR personnel are correctly compensated for their service—preventing disruptions in pay and benefits, including critical medical coverage—and provide Combatant Commanders with greater flexibility, enabling quicker mobilization and the seamless integration of AFR personnel into joint operations.

Enactment of Duty Status Reform legislation is critical to the continued integration and utilization of the ARC, and I look forward to working with Congress, OSW and OMB to move this legislation forward.

Just as we modernize our weapons systems to meet today's threats, we must also modernize the organizational frameworks that support our Joint Force. We can no longer operate effectively under outdated authorities that have, over decades, introduced unnecessary complexity and inequity.

Today, Reserve Component members conducting training or supporting operations are placed in one of nearly 30 unique statutory authorities. This fragmentation creates inefficiencies, contributes to inequities in pay and benefits, and complicates the ability of commanders to seamlessly employ Reserve forces in support of operational missions.

Duty Status Reform is essential. Legislation is needed to streamline these authorities—improving readiness, reducing administrative burden, and ensuring Reserve Component members and their families receive equitable pay and benefits regardless of duty status.

This reform will enable Combatant Commanders to more easily access and integrate Citizen Airmen and other Reserve forces into the Joint Force. It will standardize entitlements across duty categories, address longstanding pay disparities and provide clarity for members transitioning between statuses. Critically, it will help prevent disruptions in compensation and medical coverage that can negatively impact service members and their families.

We urge Congress to advance Duty Status Reform legislation in collaboration with the Department of War and the Office of Management and Budget. Streamlining duty status authorities is a vital step toward enhancing operational readiness, improving service member support, and sustaining a ready and resilient Total Force.

159. What is your understanding of the Space Force Personnel Management Act and its implications on Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve individuals and units who perform core space-related functions?

The Space Force Personnel Management Act allows the USSF to include both ‘full-time’ and ‘part-time’ Guardians under its ‘no-component’ service model. This legislation also enables Air Force Reserve Airmen to transfer to the USSF. Per the FY24 NDAA the Air Force Reserve is divesting all space missions and transferring space operations-related programming to the U.S. Space Force. All theater mobilization support is expected to end in Calendar Year (CY) 2026. The 310th Space Wing (AFRC) will be inactivated and space related facilities and equipment will be divested, repurposed, or transitioned as needed once the mission transfer is complete. The AFR is actively supporting those Airmen affected by these changes and committed to finding new roles for their continued service.

The Space Force Personnel Management Act is the legislation, codified in FY24 and FY25 NDAA's, whereby Guardsmen who were performing space missions, and possess one or more of the core Air Force Specialty Codes, can volunteer to transfer to the Active Duty Space Force. The FY25 NDAA directed an increase in the overall US Space Force end strength of 578 to accommodate the potential transfers of service members from the Air National Guard. Concurrently, Air National Guard end strength was not decremented. Responsibility for the space missions of nine (9) Air National Guard units in HI, AK, CA, CO, OH, and FL has been transferred to the USSF effective 1 Oct 2025. Each of these ANG units will be re-missioned to US Air Force mission and individual Guardsmen will be offered re-training if required per the FY25 NDAA.

160. What is your assessment of where the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve currently stand in terms of applications for transfer to the Space Force, and what challenges have emerged in that process

The first tranche of transfer applications opened in June 2024, focusing on eligible AFR Airmen desiring full-time work roles in the USSF with 381 out of 515 applicants selected for transfer. Thus far 109 AFR members have transferred with the remainder expected to transfer in FY26.

The application window for the second tranche for AFR Airmen desiring part-time work roles in the USSF opened on 3 September 2025 and closes on 10 October 2025. As of 2 Oct 25, there were 128 applicants. The Air Force Reserve is anticipating around 350 total applicants by the submission deadline.

Per the US Space Force Personnel Management Act Office, 106 Air National Guard

members submitted applications to transfer to the US Space Force during the application window that closed on 19 Sep 2025. US Space Force application processing is ongoing with full time transfers planned to begin in April 2026. Prior to opening the application window, Guardsmen were invited to participate in USSF hosted townhalls and have had continuous access to USSF developed, online Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Officer and Enlisted Guardsmen, from the six states and NGB headquarters, with Space Specialty Codes, in any status – full or part time – were invited to apply. For ANG members, the most significant challenge was a lack of information on re-missioning of non-transferring Guardsmen.

161. How do you plan to support those individual Guardsmen and Reservists who perform core space-related functions during this transition; both those who transfer and those who remain in the Air Force?

The USSF and AFR have been working together since the passing of the Space Force Personnel Management Act in the FY24 NDAA to develop and codify a smooth transition plan for those Reserve space professionals who want to transfer to the Space Force. This collaborative effort has included discussions regarding the positions that will transfer and an appropriate timeline to ensure a continued focus on national security requirements underpinned by organizational system constraints. The ultimate goal is to take care of all our space professionals as they move on to their next assignment.

For those who either do not transfer voluntarily or are not selected by USSF, we will offer retraining or reassignment within the Reserve. As the Air Force shifts focus, seasoned manpower can be retrained into AFR priorities as needed/able. We remain committed to supporting our airmen in finding the best possible path forward.

Guardsmen who volunteer for an interservice transfer to the US Space Force, as well as those who wish to remain in the Air National Guard, will be supported by continuing to perform duties in their current duty status, with their unit, performing Domestic Operations state-focused missions and Organize, Administer, Recruit, Instruct, and Training functions until either they are re-missioned in the Air National Guard or are sworn into the US Space Force. Select Guardsmen who applied for transfer into the US Space Force, and who volunteer with the approval of their state leadership, may be offered the option to be activated under Title-10, Military Personnel Appropriation orders to perform select duties for the US Space Force in their current location, until sworn into the US Space Force.

Air Force Recruiting and Retention

The 2024 National Defense Strategy Commission stated that “The DOW workforce and the all-volunteer force provide an unmatched advantage. However, recruiting failures have shrunk the force and raise serious questions about the all-volunteer force in peacetime, let alone in major combat.” In addition, DOW studies indicate that only about

23% of today's youth population is eligible for military service, and only a fraction of those who meet military accession standards are interested in serving.

162. In your view, what are the main reasons that less than a quarter of 17 to 24-year-olds are eligible for military service, and how would you propose increasing the size of that pool without degrading the quality of recruits?

I understand factors such as being overweight, using drugs, and having mental and physical health problems are among the factors that disqualify many youth in this age group. If confirmed, I will work within the Air Force and across DOW to increase the propensity to serve in young Americans qualified for military service in order to sustain the all-volunteer force and ensure the Air Force is mission-ready in defense of our nation. I commit to examining programs such as the Army's Future Soldier Program or the Navy's Future Sailor Preparatory Course as potential pathways for otherwise qualified candidates who might need a boost in their physical fitness or ASVAB scores.

This is a critical issue that directly impacts our national security and the future of our force. The fact that less than 25% of 17 to 24-year-olds are eligible for military service is deeply concerning, and it reflects a convergence of societal, educational, and health-related challenges.

In my view, the primary disqualifying factors fall into three categories:

1. **Health and Fitness:** Rising rates of obesity and other preventable health conditions have significantly reduced physical eligibility. Many young Americans do not meet the basic fitness standards required for military service.
2. **Educational Attainment and Aptitude:** A portion of this age group lacks either a high school diploma or the academic proficiency needed to succeed in today's increasingly technical military roles.
3. **Behavioral and Legal Disqualifiers:** Issues such as drug use, criminal records, and mental health concerns, many of which stem from broader systemic challenges, also contribute to ineligibility.

To expand the pool of eligible recruits without compromising quality, I propose a multi-pronged approach:

- **Early Intervention and Outreach:** We must engage earlier with potential recruits through programs like Junior ROTC, Civil Air Patrol, and STEM-focused initiatives in middle and high schools. These programs not only build awareness but also instill discipline, fitness, and civic responsibility.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborating with local communities, school districts, and health organizations can help address fitness and educational gaps. For example, supporting youth fitness programs or tutoring initiatives can indirectly improve eligibility.
- **Modernizing Screening and Waiver Processes:** While maintaining high standards, we must ensure our screening processes are agile and reflect current realities. Where

appropriate, we should consider targeted waivers for minor infractions or conditions that no longer pose a barrier to service.

Ultimately, our goal is not just to grow the pool, it is to ensure that every young American who is willing and able to serve has a clear path to do so.

163. If required to choose between maintaining high recruitment and retention standards and achieving authorized end strength levels, which would be more important, in your view?

The Air Force must maintain its readiness while simultaneously building the force of the future through data-informed recruiting and retention initiatives. Recruiting and retaining the highest caliber of warfighters are both essential to the nature of our business. Achieving these goals requires a balanced approach to meet authorized end strength levels. If confirmed, I will assess our standards and policies to ensure they support the Air Force's readiness and war-fighting needs.

If required to choose between maintaining high recruitment and retention standards and achieving authorized end strength levels, I would prioritize maintaining high standards.

Our ability to execute the National Defense Strategy depends not merely on the quantity of personnel, but on the quality, character, and capability of those who serve. Airmen today operate in increasingly complex domains, from cyberspace to advanced multi-domain operations, and the demands placed on them require exceptional skill, resilience, and judgment.

Lowering standards to meet accession targets risks undermining unit cohesion, mission effectiveness, and long-term retention. It also places undue strain on our training infrastructure and leadership, who must compensate for gaps in readiness and performance.

In short, meeting recruiting goals at the expense of standards compromises mission effectiveness.

We must be aggressive and innovative in expanding the pool of qualified candidates, through early outreach, targeted incentives, and development programs, without compromising the standards that define our profession.

We must also ensure that those who meet those standards are supported, valued, and retained through deliberate career development and quality-of-life initiatives.

164. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the Air Force maintains sufficiently high recruitment and retention standards, even if such standards result in the Air Force not achieving authorized end strength growth?

It is most important for the Air Force to maintain its readiness while simultaneously building the force of the future each Service needs through thoughtful recruiting initiatives. Given the nature of our mission, it is imperative that we recruit individuals who are fully qualified to meet the unique demands of military service. Meeting our recruiting goals reflect the deliberate steps we took over the past year to broaden our accessions aperture while upholding our high standards. Our 90% retention rate demonstrates that when Airmen join, they tend to stay. If confirmed, I will continue to champion ongoing initiatives that involve a comprehensive review of our policies, ensuring we maintain the standards required to support the Department's current and future readiness needs. Additionally, I will prioritize strengthening our connection with the American public, recognizing that one of our greatest recruiting challenges is the growing unfamiliarity among youth with the opportunities and value of service in the United States Air Force.

If confirmed, I will prioritize maintaining high recruitment and retention standards, even if doing so means we fall short of authorized end strength growth.

The nature of our mission demands excellence. Airmen operate in increasingly complex and high-stakes environments, and we cannot afford to compromise on the character, competence, or commitment required to serve. Lowering standards to meet recruiting goals would erode readiness, diminish trust, and ultimately weaken our ability to execute the National Defense Strategy.

Instead, I will continue to champion initiatives that expand access without sacrificing quality. This includes refining our accession policies to identify and support candidates with the potential to meet our standards and investing in pre-accession development programs that help bridge gaps in fitness, education, and aptitude (if necessary).

Retention remains a bright spot. Our 90% retention rate reflects the strength of our culture and the value our Airmen place on service. To sustain this, I will advocate for policies that reinforce career development, family support, and meaningful connection to mission, ensuring that those who meet our standards choose to stay.

Finally, I believe we must strengthen our relationship with the American public. Many young Americans lack familiarity with military service and the opportunities it provides. Through targeted outreach, community engagement, and partnerships with educators and civic organizations, we can inspire a new generation to serve, without compromising who we are.

165. Rather than relying solely on ever-higher compensation for a shrinking pool of volunteers, what creative steps would you take, if confirmed, to expand the pool of eligible recruits and improve Air Force recruiting?

We are proud to champion a culture of excellence, knowing that our unwavering commitment to high standards will inspire young Americans to see us as a top-tier team, one that challenges them to become the best version of themselves.

We believe that young Americans possess a deep, intrinsic drive to be part of something greater than themselves.

If confirmed, I will continue to enforce our consistently high, meritocratic standards, and expand our reach to veterans and youth. I will shift from simply offering incentives to cultivating interest, building trust, and inspiring commitment. The Air Force offers unmatched opportunities for growth, leadership, and service.

This innate pursuit of greatness will compel the next generation to join our ranks as we ascend to new heights as the world's premier Air Force.

166. What do you consider to be key to the Air Force's future success in retaining the best qualified personnel for continued service in positions of greater responsibility and leadership in the Air Force?

The Air Force continues to retain and develop extremely competent leaders. The key to developing and retaining our personnel lies in fielding a continuum of training, education, and experiential development that fosters Air Force leaders. If confirmed, I will collaborate with our force development and management experts as well as career field managers to align officer, enlisted, and civilian development with Air Force needs and assess innovative ways to retain talented individuals with a passion for what they do, but who prefer a non-standard career path. I will also ensure we maintain robust quality of life and quality of service programs to support Airmen and their families throughout their service.

167. In your view, should existing medical and other qualification standards be reconsidered to accommodate youth willing to enlist for service in certain high-demand specialties, such as remotely piloted aircraft pilots or the cyber workforce?

I currently have no reason or data to doubt the current standards and criteria. I am aware that DAF provided more flexibility to the accession standards for food allergies, hearing loss and asthma recently. Moreover, I support the School of Aerospace Medicine's work to analyze the readiness impact of waiver decisions. If confirmed, I would continue to challenge the Air Force to find data-informed ways to balance our standards to keep pace with medical science and modernization while meeting the need for a ready and capable force. To that end, I will keep the balance of those standards in the forefront and work with DoW to maximize our effectiveness and ensure force readiness.

168. In your view, does the Air Force have the necessary authorities to recruit and retain personnel with critical skills, including cyber?

With the necessary authorities provided by Congress, the Air Force is better equipped to compete with industry and our adversaries over the nationwide shortage of highly skilled cybersecurity professionals and the limited pool of highly technical focused applicants. The Air Force currently employs a comprehensive suite of recruiting and retention tools

including direct appointment authority, constructive credit for critical line officers, assignment incentive pay, and retention bonuses that enable us to attract and retain highly skilled, in-demand personnel. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for the flexibility needed to grow and advance our workforce, ensuring we possess the right skills in sufficient numbers to maintain a competitive edge in a high-end fight.

Air Force Junior ROTC

The Air Force's FY26 budget request proposes eliminating program funding of roughly \$75 million for Junior ROTC. Air Force JROTC supports approximately 90,000 cadets across 870 units in high schools nationwide and overseas. It is important that cadets, schools, and communities relying on Junior ROTC have stability and predictability rather than uncertainty about the program's survival each fiscal year

169. In your view, what value should the Air Force place on Junior ROTC as a leadership pipeline, community engagement platform, and character-building program, beyond its role as a recruiting tool?

Junior ROTC (JROTC) is a vital program that develops citizenship, character, and leadership in more than 86,000 young Americans—all values essential to national service, regardless of uniform. Furthermore, it builds lasting community ties, offers mentorship and structure to youth, and cultivates future leaders grounded in integrity and service. JROTC also partners with the CAP to expand opportunities in aerospace education, leadership development, and community service, providing cadets with practical experiences that reinforce Air Force values and strengthen their preparation for future service to the nation.

170. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring stable funding for Junior ROTC in future years rather than treating it as an annual add-back?

Yes, if confirmed, I will advocate for stable, predictable funding for JROTC to sustain its impact on youth leadership and civic engagement. The program reaches thousands of students nationwide, many from underserved communities, and provides discipline, mentorship, and a sense of purpose. Long-term funding ensures quality instruction, access, and continuity for a program that strengthens the bond between the Air Force and the nation's youth. If confirmed, I will work to embed its funding into baseline planning and advocate for its continued growth as part of our broader mission to develop future leaders and engaged citizens.

U.S. Air Force Academy

171. In your view, what is the unique value provided by the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) when compared with the other Air Force commissioning sources?

The U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) provides a unique and immersive 47-month experience that integrates military training, rigorous academics—particularly in STEM

and warfighting disciplines—and intense athletics to forge adaptable, air-, space-, and cyber-minded warrior-leaders. Unlike shorter commissioning programs, USAFA's comprehensive development cultivates mental fortitude, physical resilience, and operational understanding, preparing graduates to lead with integrity and innovation from day one.

USAFA also emphasizes leadership development through progressive roles, from follower to unit leader, and offers extensive research opportunities and a curriculum adaptable to the evolving needs of the Air Force and Space Forces. Its focus on character development, accountability, and mission readiness ensures graduates are equipped to meet the challenges of modern warfare and inspire those they lead.

172. If confirmed, what changes to the organization, curriculum, or operations of USAFA do you envision recommending?

To ensure USAFA remains at the forefront of developing warrior-leaders, I would champion its **ongoing transformation to instill a warfighting culture across all facets of the cadet experience**. This includes refining the **military, academic, and athletic curriculum** to meet evolving Air and Space Force needs, maintaining a **world-class faculty, flattening staff structures** for operational efficiency, and **prioritizing strategic infrastructure improvements**. The goal is to optimize USAFA's organization, curriculum, and operations, ultimately producing commissioned officers capable of leading in demanding environments and achieving mission success.

The Academy is currently undergoing a period of transformation that aligns with Secretary of War guidance to focus on instituting a warfighting culture. Over the last year, USAFA has infused a warfighting mindset and warrior ethos across all aspects of a cadets' 47-month experience, militarily, academically, and athletically. Moving forward, it is my expectation USAFA will remain laser focused on forging warrior-leaders who are leaders of character, motivated to a lifetime of service to our nation, and ready to lead our Air Force and Space Force as we fight and win our Nation's wars. The Academy must also continue to evolve, to remain at the forefront of innovation and optimize its organization, curriculum, infrastructure and/or operations. This includes delivering a warfighting focused curriculum (military, academic, and athletic) aligned to the needs of our Air Force, maintaining and developing a world-class faculty and permanent party, flattening staff echelons to operationalize the Headquarters staff, and improving its facilities through key strategic infrastructure initiatives. These efforts ensure it develops commissioned officers capable of leading our Airmen and Guardians in the most difficult of situations to accomplish our mission.

Pilot Retention

The Air Force faces persistent challenges in retaining experienced pilots, driven by competition from the civilian sector and the unique demands of military service. Congress has provided new authorities to address this crisis, including the Rated Officer Retention

Demonstration Program authorized in the FY23 NDAA and the Aviation Retention Bonus Pilot Program authorized in the FY24 NDAA, which together offer both greater flexibility in structuring contracts and increased monetary incentives of up to \$50,000 annually.

173. In your view, will raising aviation retention bonuses and modernizing contract lengths at critical career junctures help the Air Force retain skilled pilots? Why or why not?

Yes, raising aviation retention bonuses and modernizing contract lengths at critical career junctures will help the Air Force retain skilled pilots. Competitive monetary incentives and modernized contracts are essential to keeping pace with today's economic environment and addressing pilots' desire for agency in their career progression. Directing maximum incentives to critically manned aviation fields will positively impact retention, preserve talent, and enhance mission readiness. Programs like the Rated Demonstration and Aviation Retention Bonus further support these efforts to retain highly trained aviators along with non-monetary programs and incentives.

174. What monetary and non-monetary incentives has the Air Force employed to address pilot retention, and which approaches do you believe are most effective?

- We are pursuing a balanced approach that encompasses both monetary and non-monetary incentives, focusing on the areas we believe will have the greatest impact on retaining our experienced pilots in the Air Force.
- We are actively working with the Department of War to implement the maximum Aviation Incentive Pay (AvIP) authorized by Congress in the FY23 NDAA.
- We are expanding non-monetary incentives like the Consecutive Assignments In-Place Program, which allows pilots to remain at their current location for longer periods to enable family stability.
- We are investing in our Weapons System Sustainment and Flying Hour Program accounts to improve aircraft availability and ensure our pilots get more time in the cockpit, honing their skills and contributing to the mission.
- We believe that the proper use of monetary incentives will yield the most effective retention results.

175. If confirmed, what additional steps would you take to retain the requisite number of pilots in the Air Force?

- If confirmed, I will prioritize working with Congress to enhance Air Force pilot retention through improved monetary and non-monetary incentives.
- Aligning monetary incentives to desired outcomes is critical for swift improvement and will provide time to enable the success of our long-term strategy over the next decade.
- Currently, the Aviation Bonus doesn't keep pace with industry growth. We must offer a competitive package, especially for pilots with critical skills that are in high demand in the civilian sector.
- We will expand non-monetary programs like the Trainer Pilot and Flexible Rated Career Paths to increase predictability and improve work-life balance.

- We will continue to increase funding for Weapons System Sustainment and Flying Hour Program to maximize pilot skills and readiness.

176. How has the Air Force increased pilot production capacity commensurate with the demands of the INDSG?

Air Education and Training Command has developed a comprehensive solution increases pilot production capacity by optimizing existing resources. This effort led to a transformative overhaul of Undergraduate Pilot Training, which has evolved into the Future of Undergraduate Pilot Training (FUPT) initiative.

FUPT boldly transforms pilot training by integrating commercial flight programs through Educational Service Agreements allowing the Air Force undergraduate training to focus on military specific tasks. The updated model will significantly improve capacity allowing us to meet Air Force requirements.

The term “pilot absorption” references the ability for operational units to season new pilots without losing operational effectiveness. Without additional resources, increased pilot production will strain our pilot absorption capacity, particularly in the fighter community. Mission capable aircraft and experienced instructor pilots are required for a healthy absorption system. Increasing resources for Weapons System Sustainment and Flying Hour Program accounts, while retaining critical maintenance personnel, will improve the aircraft availability. Additionally, improvements to pilot retention programs like the Aviation Bonus (AvB) and Aviation Incentive Pay (AvIP) will keep the experienced pilots for healthy absorption.

Further, the Air Force is also addressing pilot production capacity through a multi-pronged approach that encompasses recruitment, retention, modernization of training, and monetary incentives.

Military Compensation

The Department of War has traditionally assessed the competitiveness of military pay by comparing Regular Military Compensation against salaries earned by a comparable civilian demographic.

177. Do you agree that the primary purpose of a competitive military pay and benefits package is to recruit and retain a military of sufficient size and quality to meet national defense objectives?

Yes, the regular military compensation package, including basic pay, housing allowance, subsistence allowance, Federal Income Tax advantage of allowances, leave program, the Blended Retirement System, and other pay and benefit components, are intended to effectively compensate military members during peace and war, be competitive,

predictable, and understandable. The DOW continues to exceed the established 70th percentile as the baseline for military compensation. The 2025 4.5% increase in military basic pay, along with a 14.5% raise for military service members in the junior enlisted ranks of E-1 through E-4 and junior E-5s, and a 5.4% increase to housing allowance, are key factors in retaining and recruiting members necessary to maintain a sufficient size and quality of the Air Force.

Yes, I fully agree that the primary purpose of a competitive military pay, and benefits package is to recruit and retain a force of sufficient size and quality to meet our national defense objectives.

Military compensation must reflect the unique demands of service. It must be fair, flexible, and competitive enough to attract top talent, while also being predictable and motivational to retain experienced Airmen.

However, compensation alone is not enough. It must be part of a broader strategy that includes professional development, family support, quality of life, and a clear sense of purpose. When Airmen feel valued, both financially and personally, they stay, they lead, and they excel.

If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for a compensation framework that not only meets economic realities but also honors the sacrifice and excellence of our Airmen. Recruiting and retaining a high-quality force is not just a budgetary concern, it is a strategic imperative.

178. The 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, released in January 2025, concluded that the current military compensation package is strongly competitive with the civilian labor market. What is your assessment of the current military pay package and its adequacy in recruiting and retaining servicemembers?

I believe that overall, we have a competitive pay package. With an all-volunteer force, the comprehensive compensation package must be competitive enough to attract and retain talent, and while recruiting has been a challenge, statistically, when people join the Air Force, they stay with us. I believe that is a testament to many factors such as our mission, quality of life, and care for our force and their families, but pay and compensation is very important. As the 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation highlighted, while the DoW's core pay package is strong, there's a need for greater transparency in pay calculation and communication, and for reducing pay volatility. Meeting the unique challenges of military life for our Airmen and their families, such as spousal employment and the cost and turmoil of multiple moves, is always a challenge. The same review suggested exploring targeted non-cash compensation and support for military spouses, which recognizes the impact of service on dual-income households and retention decisions. If confirmed, I will continue to champion and address changes where needed, including pursuing those avenues for improvement identified in the recent compensation review. In addition, if confirmed, I will evaluate the impact of DoW decisions to require servicemembers to cover up to 5

percent of the average housing costs and whether a return to full coverage is warranted.

- 179. In recent years, Congress worked toward a substantial pay raise for junior enlisted troops, which culminated in a 14.5 percent increase in basic pay for grades E-1 to E-4 and a 4.5 percent across-the-board annual pay increase for the rest of the military in the FY25 NDAA. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the current military pay and benefits package, if confirmed?**

If confirmed, I would approach any changes to the current military pay and benefits package with a deliberate and data-driven strategy, and take into consideration any confounding factors such as the strength of the economy and public opinion of the military that may have boosted recent recruiting and retention goals.

- 180. How can the Department of the Air Force utilize targeted bonuses and incentives to reward and retain personnel in critical skill areas?**

The Air Force continuously reviews specialized critical skills required to dominate in a high-end fight and leverages targeted bonuses to retain these hard-to-fill specialties based on Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) and skill level. While monetary incentives can help to an extent, there are some high ops-tempo skill sets that may require more emphasis on non-monetary incentives to retain and improve quality of life. Due to manning and statute constraints, there are limitations to the non-monetary incentives that can be offered and would need to be further analyzed. If confirmed, I will assess how current bonuses and incentives may be complemented with non-monetary benefits and streamlined approval processes in order to rapidly address skill gaps and maintain mission readiness.

- 181. What specific recommendations do you have for balancing rising military personnel expenditures with other defense spending priorities, such as procurement and modernization?**

I understand and appreciate the need to balance rising military personnel costs with procurement and modernization. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of the Air Force and leaders across the Department of War to address rising personnel costs that not only addresses military compensation and benefits, but also the force management and overall personnel mix decisions that affect overall costs as well as assess how to better optimize the budget while sustaining readiness to ensure a combat-ready force with advanced capabilities.

Military Quality of Life

The Committee remains concerned about the sustainment of key quality of life programs for military families, such as family advocacy and parenting skills programs; child care; spouse education and employment support; health care; and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) services.

182. If confirmed, what quality of life and MWR programs would you consider a priority?

Priority quality of life and MWR programs include fitness and wellness services, child care and youth programs, family support initiatives, and recreational activities. These programs are critical to sustaining mission readiness, personal resilience, and family stability. They directly impact the physical health, mental well-being, and morale of Airmen, enabling them to perform their duties effectively while maintaining a balanced lifestyle. By ensuring access to these resources, the Air Force strengthens retention, builds community, and enhances overall force capability.

183. How would you work across the Air Force and with Military Service Organizations and Congress, to sustain and enrich high-value quality of life and MWR programs for airmen and their families?

Quality of life and MWR programs, such as childcare, youth development, and fitness, are vital to maintaining the readiness and resilience of our Airmen and their families. To sustain and enrich these programs, I will foster collaborative partnerships across the Air Force, Military Service Organizations, and Congress by aligning strategic priorities, sharing data-driven outcomes, and advocating for consistent funding. This includes transparent dialogue about program impacts on readiness and retention, leveraging community-based support networks, and promoting initiatives that expand access to essential services. By incorporating Airmen feedback and utilizing data sources such as program utilization metrics and readiness indicators, we can focus efforts on high-impact programs that strengthen morale, retention, and overall force capability.

Military Housing

184. What is your current assessment of privatized housing inside the Air Force?

When our Airmen and their families have access to safe and well-maintained housing, we are a more focused, mission-ready force. In my experience, our efforts to privatize housing for our service have not always delivered. Well-documented cases involving unsafe or unsanitary conditions, inadequate dispute resolution, and accountability challenges leave our Airmen and their families in unsuitable situations. If confirmed, you have my commitment that we will continue to make housing quality standards a priority for our force and will ensure that we hold privatized housing partners accountable to their obligation to support our Airmen in the same way.

185. As it pertains to unaccompanied barracks, do you believe the Air Force should utilize waivers to waive habitability and living standards?

No, the quality of life of our Airmen and Guardians are of paramount importance to the Department of the Air Force. Our goal is to meet habitability and living standards across the unaccompanied barracks portfolio without waivers. In rare cases, a temporary waiver

may be necessary but if this occurs, I will ensure to maximize the quality of life of Airmen and Guardians, drive to eliminate the need for the waiver; and correct the deficiency as quickly as possible.

Family Readiness and Support

186. What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues for airmen and their families?

I believe financial readiness is the most important family readiness issue for our Airmen and their families. From accession through career milestones and transition from military service, tailored education and support are essential to addressing challenges like child care affordability and housing costs. Equally important are healthcare—including mental and behavioral health—and adequate housing. If confirmed, I will build on existing efforts and explore innovative solutions to strengthen family readiness and ensure our Airmen and their families are supported throughout their service.

187. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the family readiness issues you identified are properly addressed and adequately resourced?

If confirmed, I will ensure family readiness issues are properly addressed and adequately resourced by focusing on key areas of financial readiness, child care availability, and food access. For financial readiness, I will emphasize personal financial education and resource programs that alleviate financial burdens, while fostering a culture where seeking help is seen as a strength and a leadership trait. I will also advocate for recruitment and retention incentives in family readiness programs and leverage community-based resources to support Service Members and their families.

For child care, I will prioritize recruitment and retention incentives for Child and Youth Program (CYP) staff, such as fee discounts and competitive wages, while advocating for expanded capacity both on and off installations. Programs like Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN), Family Child Care Programs, and other community-based resources will be leveraged to meet child care needs, and I will work to secure funding for new or modified facilities in areas with high unmet demand.

For food access, I will advocate for competitively priced contract solutions, refurbishment or replacement of aging facilities, and initiatives that increase access to healthy options, such as DOW's Go-4-Green program and the Air Force's Food 2.0 and campus dining initiatives. By addressing these critical areas, we can ensure our Airmen and their families are supported and ready to meet mission demands.

188. If confirmed, how would you ensure that support related to mobilization, deployment, and family readiness is provided to Air Force Reserve Component families, as well as to active duty Air Force families who do not reside near a military base?

Military and Family Readiness Centers are postured to support the Total Force through all phases of deployment: pre-deployment, deployment and sustainment, re-deployment and reintegration, and post-deployment, regardless of where families reside. These centers foster care relationships with deploying Airmen, their units, and family members to ensure comprehensive support. Reserve Components also leverage local community partnerships and programs like the DOW Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program to enhance readiness and resilience. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize approaches that leverage unit cohesion, expand Readiness Center support, and utilize community partnerships to ensure all Total Air Force families are supported throughout the deployment cycle.

189. In your view, what role do non-medical counseling services provided by DOW Military Family Life Counselors have in promoting the readiness of the force and family?

Military and Family Life Counselors are providing essential and immediate non-medical counseling for servicemembers and their families, promoting the overall readiness of our Total Force. The DAF has more than 900 counselor positions in Family Readiness Centers, child development centers, and school-based programs serving as a first line of engagement for our Airmen, Guardians, and families. If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize the importance of Service Members proactively connecting with our Military and Family Life Counselors to benefit their holistic readiness.

The Committee often hears that active duty families have difficulty obtaining child care on base and can struggle to obtain care off base in certain high-demand areas.

190. If confirmed, specifically would you do to provide Air Force families with accessible, high-quality childcare, at an appropriate cost?

Available, affordable, and quality child care services allow Airmen to focus on and execute the Air Force's mission. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Air Force continues to advocate for adequate staffing and high-quality training, focus on management efficiencies to maximize available child care, invest in solutions that expand options such as subsidized community care, and invest in facilities to expand the number of spaces available where unmet need is the greatest. Further, it is critical that we continue to invest in digital tools that support streamlined enrollment, waitlist management, workforce optimization, and the general safety of children. If confirmed, I will seek to ensure we have integrated and accessible data to enable decisions that appropriately evaluate installation specific considerations, thereby allowing the right mix of military facilities, family care centers, and other community-based resources to support our collective child care needs.

Support for Military Families with Special Needs

191. If confirmed, how would you ensure that an airman with a special needs family member is relocated only to a new duty station at which the medical and educational services required by that family member are available?

If confirmed, I will ensure EFMP families receive the transparent, timely, and compassionate support they deserve. The program has faced challenges over the years ranging from complex processes, to limited transparency, and delays in verifying medical and educational services – all of which create frustrations for our EFMP families. To combat this, we've centralized coordination at the Air Force's Personnel Center, automated key steps in the process, and expanded staff to improve communication and responsiveness so families feel seen, heard, and fully supported throughout their reassignment process. I will continue to support the improvements and will work to remove any continued barriers.

192. If confirmed, how would you incentivize airmen to enroll in the exceptional family member program (EFMP) balancing the needs of the Air Force, the needs of exceptional family members, and the desires of both airmen and their dependents to have a rewarding experience in the Air Force?

The Exceptional Family Member Program is the most effective way that we can take care of Service Member families with special needs. Enrollment connects families with medical, educational, and resilience resources at installations that can meet them at their personalized needs. The key to this program's success is members' confidence in the benefits of supporting them and their families as they progress through their careers. The confidence comes through consistency and communication. If confirmed I will continue to advocate Service Member participation in the Exceptional Family Member Program as a critical family readiness tool and increase personal attention for each of our Airmen.

193. If confirmed, what new initiatives might you suggest for improving the ability of airmen with a special needs family member to obtain the medical services and support their family member requires?

The Developmental and Behavioral Family Readiness Center (DBFRC) began in 2020 as a hub and spoke program connecting pediatric Air Force special needs family members with developmental, behavioral, and mental health services at smaller/remote locations through video Mental and Behavioral Health Care telehealth, supporting local providers, and periodic in person visits. Nine DBFRC hubs around the world support over 75 smaller military treatment facilities. The Air Force has a goal of adding behavioral care providers for adult dependents in the future. I look forward to continuing to develop more efficient and effective means for these families to get necessary services.

Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Military Families

194. What is your understanding of the extent of domestic violence and child abuse in the Air Force, and if confirmed, what actions would you take to address these issues?

My understanding of domestic violence and child abuse comes from multiple opportunities to command up to and including the Air Combat Command. If confirmed, I will charge the Air Force to focus on actions like reviewing victim advocacy support, training provided to leadership and individual members, our response and assessment processes, and how we address language barriers. It's important the Air Force remain committed to holding abusers appropriately accountable through their chains of command according to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

The Air Force is engaged in multiple efforts to improve available resources and communication of those resources to domestic violence victims while simultaneously increasing education and awareness efforts on the prevention of child abuse and neglect and domestic abuse for Airmen and their family members. We will continue to increase victim advocacy support, improve leadership and individual member training, modify our response and assessment processes, and translate resources into multiple languages to better support victims and families. At the same time, we are also committed to holding abusers accountable through their chains of command according to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

195. In your view, what more can the Department do to *prevent* child abuse and domestic and intimate partner violence?

The DAF must continue efforts to engage directly with individuals that are at the highest risk of child abuse and neglect or domestic and intimate partner violence. The Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce will use primary prevention efforts to address multiple harmful behaviors and increase protective factors and efficiency in the installation prevention system to decrease risk factors. We must also provide those at risk of engaging in such behavior with positive prevention activities to utilize coping skills and get them the assistance they need to seek help rather than resort to violent, abusive, or neglectful behaviors.

196. Do you believe that the Air Force Department's Family Advocacy Program strikes the right balance between healing families and holding individuals accountable for acts of domestic violence and child abuse?

Yes, addressing domestic violence, child abuse and neglect will enable individuals and families to access the resources they need to heal and ensure that abusers are held accountable for their actions. The Family Advocacy Program focuses on providing families with appropriate preventative and support resources. Our military justice system, including the Office of Special Trial Counsel and the chain of command, holds those who commit domestic violence and child abuse offenses accountable. We will focus on both the prevention of and response to this crucial issue.

Mental and Behavioral Health Care

197. If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to airmen in theater, as well as to airmen and families at home station locations?

We deploy clinical mental health providers and technicians for member care in theater. There are currently efforts to ensure all airmen are trained in the basics of psychological first aid. If confirmed, I will continue to support these to maintain resilience of the force. Families and airmen at home station will continue to have resources provided by their embedded medics (True North, Operational Support Teams), MTFs and TRICARE networks, and Military OneSource, Military and Family Life Consultants, Primary Care Behavioral Health Providers, Primary Care providers and chaplains.

198. If confirmed, what specifically would you do to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to Reserve Component airmen and their families who do not reside near a military base?

Reserve members on Title 10 orders for more than 30 days have the same mental health benefits as active duty. Every base has Defense Health Program (DHP) resources and Chaplains and Family Advocacy program coordinators to assist military and DEERS registered family members to mental health resources in their local community. Mental healthcare when not in Title 10 status is covered through civilian insurance, or TRICARE Reserve Select, if enrolled. Reserve installations also have a Director of Psychological Health who is as the primary mental health resource, providing direct support and resource and referrals as needed.

Additionally, Military One Source is available to all servicemembers and DEERS registered family members 24/7 and connects them to nonmedical counseling such as stress management, marital problems, grief or loss, adjustment and deployment concerns. Military One Source is available for serving service members, families, and survivors to assist in living their best military life.

The Air Force has made progress in reducing the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors, but many airmen, especially senior leaders, remain concerned that their military careers will be adversely affected should their chains of command become aware that they are seeking mental or behavioral health care. At the same time, the Air Force chain of command has a legitimate need to be aware of physical and mental health conditions that may affect the readiness of the airmen under their command.

199. In your view, does the Air Force effectively bridge the gap between a servicemember'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?

Yes, the Air Force has policies and procedures in place to balance confidentiality with the chain of command's legitimate need to know. The Air Force educates members on the availability of mental health services including benefits from the Brandon Act which

expedites the connection to care. Confidentiality is only broken to ensure safety or due to specific exigent circumstances. When broken, the minimum information necessary is conveyed.

200. In your view, what is the role of non-medical counseling services provided by DOW Military Family Life Counselors in promoting the readiness of airmen and their families?

Military Family Life Counselors are a critical first line of immediate access to non-medical counseling services. These counselors have a multi-faceted mission. They embed in on-base schools assisting our youngest demographic with unique military child challenges. Additionally, command teams can request counselors to embed in their units for quick-response engagement on potential issues. Military Family Life Counselors also do trend analysis to target resources where needed across installations. If confirmed, I will continue to leverage this critical support to enhance readiness.

Audit

201. Why is it important for the Air Force to achieve a clean audit opinion?

Our oath to support and defend our Constitution is an explicit obligation to the American public, while our stewardship of the nation's budget carries an implicit obligation to the American taxpayer. Achieving an unmodified financial statement audit opinion demonstrates the DAF's ability to execute our mission while maintaining the public's trust.

Through working to secure a clean audit opinion, DAF stakeholders are learning the true cost of mission operations, empowering senior leaders to more effectively plan for future needs. This in turn empowers mission readiness, reduces waste, and directly impacts our warfighters' ability to respond to emerging threats around the world.

In addition to accountability to the American people, a clean audit opinion heightens awareness of the location, count, and condition of U.S. Air Force and U.S. Space Force assets. Audit transformation is fueling the potential to make significant impacts in other areas of operations, such as addressing aircraft readiness rates by enabling faster part delivery and smarter sustainment investments, or tracking asset condition to better plan maintenance schedules and prevent malfunctions that could put our pilots' lives in danger.

202. What steps has the Air Force taken to evaluate unit readiness and commander performance based on audit results?

Senior leaders are engaged in the audit process and held accountable for progress through acceleration plans and regular reporting to the Executive Steering Committee, chaired by the Under Secretary of the Air Force and reinforced by the SecAF's June 2025 Tone from the Top memorandum. Additionally, our Senior Executives' performance evaluations

include assessing their contributions to audit outcomes. With buy-in across the Secretariat and Air Staff and across Major Command and Field Command leadership, the DAF is all-in to achieve a clean audit opinion.

203. What challenges are unique to conducting an audit of the Air Force? If confirmed, how do you plan to overcome those challenges to ensure that the Air Force makes demonstrable progress towards a clean audit opinion?

The DAF needs to overcome several challenges to achieve a clean audit opinion, including a reliance on third-party service providers who struggle to supply timely and quality data on the DAF-owned assets they store and the transactional activity they maintain. Not having good data when we need it makes remediation activities like validation much harder. Above all, our information technology environment is burdened with hundreds of redundant, disparate, and dated systems, which hinders our ability to secure and maintain the reliable data we need to pass the audit. To overcome those challenges and work around current gaps, the DAF is striving to rapidly and smartly modernize its business system portfolio. Additionally, we are pivoting our approach from a controls-based audit approach to a substantive approach. This requires full commitment from our Total Force to handle a larger workload in directly testing balances and responding quickly to more auditor requests, but it is our best path toward securing a clean audit opinion by the Congressionally mandated timeline. The DAF total force is “all in.”

204. In your view, how, if at all, do the audit and its remediation activities support the President’s defense strategy?

Audit and remediation activities support the President’s defense strategy and Air and Space Force missions by improving warfighter readiness. A clean audit increases visibility into the location, count, and condition of assets across the Department, enabling better resource management and faster, more confident responses to global threats.

The FY 2024 National Defense Authorization Act requires the Department of War to receive an unqualified opinion on financial statements of the Department by December 31, 2028.

205. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the Air Force meets Congress’ mandate?

The DAF continues to make significant progress with the audit as roughly 70% of our General Fund balance sheet is considered audit ready. If confirmed, I would maintain the momentum of audit being a top priority and continue to push for accelerated results by taking advantage of industry tools and software that can enable rapid acceleration of audit activities. In addition, I will support the SecAF’s efforts to establish a culture of audit accountability within the DAF, including an updated governance approach, stringent timelines for senior leader remediation efforts, and targeted investments to expedite our path to an unmodified audit opinion by the 2028 Congressional mandate.

Officer Personnel Management System Reforms

The John S. McCain NDAA for FY 2019 contained several provisions to modernize the officer personnel management system. These reforms were designed to align officer career management with the priorities outlined in the 2018 NDS.

206. How is the Air Force implementing these authorities today and to what effect?

The Air Force is leveraging the officer personnel management authorities provided in the John S. McCain NDAA for FY 2019 to strategically and agilely shape the workforce needed for the high-end fight. These tools allow us to align officer career management with mission priorities and adapt to evolving operational demands.

For general officers, the Air Force has implemented Section 510 by appointing the Chief of Chaplains in the grade of major general and Section 509 by ensuring all general officer retirements are certified by the Secretary of War or Secretary of the Air Force, as required. These reforms enhance our ability to manage talent effectively and ensure readiness for the challenges of modern warfare.

If confirmed, I will continue to evaluate these authorities to ensure they are being used effectively today and to shape the workforce we need for tomorrow.

207. If confirmed, how would you lead the Air Force in further leveraging these new authorities?

If confirmed, I will evaluate each authority to ensure the Air Force is fully leveraging the tools provided to build and sustain the workforce needed for future challenges. Adapting to a dynamic environment requires identifying untapped potential within current authorities and, where necessary, implementing policy changes to promote and retain an agile and lethal force. I am committed to ensuring these authorities are used strategically to shape a workforce capable of meeting the demands of modern warfare.

208. Are there other authorities that the Air Force needs in order to modernize the management of its officer personnel?

The Air Force would benefit from additional authorities that enable greater permeability between regular and reserve forces. Enhanced flexibility to move seamlessly between components would help attract and retain talent while maximizing the capabilities of our entire workforce. This would allow the Air Force to better adapt to evolving mission demands and leverage the full potential of its personnel.

Joint Officer Management

209. In your view, are the requirements associated with becoming a Joint Qualified Officer, and the link between attaining joint qualification and eligibility for

promotion to general officer rank, consistent with the operational and professional demands of Air Force officers?

Yes, the requirements for becoming a Joint Qualified Officer (JQO) and the link between joint qualification and eligibility for promotion to general officer rank are consistent with the operational and professional demands of Air Force officers. In accordance with DOWI 1300.19, the Air Force ensures officers assigned to Joint Duty Assignments meet joint promotion qualification objectives. Career Field Managers and Assignment Teams actively vector highly competitive officers to joint billets, monitor their careers, and ensure they remain on track for competitive assignments and promotion, aligning with both operational needs and professional development goals.

210. In your view, what additional modifications, if any, to JQO prerequisites are necessary to ensure that Air Force officers are able to attain both meaningful joint and Air Force-specific leadership experience and adequate professional development?

The Air Force recommends no additional modifications to JQO prerequisites at this time. The current Joint Officer Qualification System is effective, allowing Active and Reserve component officers to attain joint qualifications by completing the required joint professional military education and a full tour of duty in a joint assignment, either through the standard or experience path. The Air Force is actively researching and developing internal policies to enhance talent management for Joint Qualified Officers. These efforts aim to increase deliberate assignments and follow-on utilization, ensuring systematic, progressive, and career-long development in joint matters.

211. In your view, are the current requirements for becoming a Joint Qualified Officer appropriate for reserve component officers? If not, how should they be revised to better meet the needs of reserve component officers?

The Air Force recommends no changes to the current requirements for reserve component officers to become Joint Qualified Officers. The existing Joint Officer Qualification System is effective, allowing reserve officers to attain joint qualifications by completing the required joint professional military education and a full tour of duty in a joint assignment, either through the standard or experience path. The Air Force is actively researching and developing internal policies to enhance talent management for Joint Qualified Officers, ensuring deliberate assignments and follow-on utilization to support systematic, progressive, and career-long development in joint matters.

Professional Military Education

212. If confirmed, what actions would you take to update the Air Force's PME system to ensure that it fosters the skills needed to develop a cadre of strategic thinkers and

planners with both the intellectual and military leadership acumen to merit promotion to General Officer?

The Air Force has worked hard to ensure that all of our professional military education programs educate and train Airmen for near peer competition, including key adversaries' strategy, and warfighting approaches. If confirmed, I will ensure the Air Force continues to support the NDS by developing Airmen with the scholarly expertise, critical-thinking skills, and strategic vision necessary to anticipate requirements and future capabilities—focusing on technology, innovation, and STEM. Enhancing the PME curriculum and fellowships will maintain enduring military advantages and produce strategically minded joint warfighters that can creatively apply military power.

Key statements – Confirm continued focus, support strategic effort

213. In your view, are there opportunities in Air Force PME to improve STEM cognizance and cyber fluency across the joint force to ensure that leaders understand and can effectively employ technologies to fight and win our nation's wars?

Yes, our PME curricula are continuously adapted to stay current with changes in law, strategic guidance, and emerging technologies that enable joint/service warfighting concepts with the intent to develop practical warfighting skills. Our Air Force schools have significantly emphasized strategic competition, including creating research task forces with STEM-focused topics and classified lecture series on topics such as Cyber. We have focused our PME fellowship opportunities focusing on emerging technology and innovation research. Our Education with Industry program helps develop leaders capable of impacting the implementation of innovative ideas within the DAF by learning industry partner best practices and bringing those ideas back to the Air Force. We also partnered with Digital University (a consortium of virtual learning opportunities) to grow digital literacy competencies and scale training and education in cyber fluency, communications, and information technology advances.

214. In your view, is there a role for Air Force PME 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?

Yes, Air Force PME plays a critical role in developing basic product management skills to ensure military leaders are proficient in employing software and automation in warfighting. Air Force leaders must be equipped to incorporate new technology more rapidly and effectively than our competitors. Development of these leaders requires them to be more versed in digital language and its application in warfighting. To support this, PME has expanded wargaming throughout the academic year, including exercises involving all-domain, globally integrated operations in WestPac and Central Europe, as well as the Joint Land Air & Sea Strategic Exercise at Air War College to enhance

collaboration and experiential learning. Analytical wargaming provides robust analysis that informs strategic decisions on policy, risk management, and future force options.

Additionally, Air Force personnel would benefit from product management skills such as leading cross-functional teams aligned toward a common goal, collaborating with stakeholders with competing priorities, and translating mission requirements into technical solutions. These skills drive innovation and organizational change, enabling the integration of advanced data analytics and AI into military operations and business processes.

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.

215. 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?

The Air Force has a deliberate development process for senior leaders that includes joint and nuclear educational considerations. (A1D) To further 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, increased opportunities for joint education and joint experience are essential. (A1LG) These efforts will ensure leaders are prepared to navigate complex strategic challenges and effectively integrate capabilities across the joint force

The Air Force Civilian Personnel Workforce

DOW is the federal government's largest employer of civilian personnel. The vast majority of DOW and Air Force civilian personnel policies comport with requirements set forth in title 5 of the U.S. Code, and corresponding regulations under the purview of the Office of Personnel Management. Over the years, the annual defense bill has included numerous extraordinary hiring and management authorities applicable to specific segments of the DOW and Air Force civilian workforces.

216. In your judgment, what is the biggest challenge facing the Department of the Air Force in effectively and efficiently managing its civilian workforce?

The biggest challenge is the ability to be agile within our existing, oftentimes rigid personnel systems and processes. If confirmed, I would maximize the numerous hiring and compensation flexibilities and authorities Congress has provided and seek out ways to bring long-lasting improvements through a meritocratic culture that promotes innovation and excellence. In addition, I welcome the changes the Secretary of War is implementing to reduce the administrative processes required to hold poor-performers accountable. Moreover, I look forward to helping the administration's implement a private-sector-like personnel management approach to policy and career-impacting

positions. Finally, I endorse whole-heartedly the Secretary of War's initiatives to provide incentives to our top performers. Without a top-tier civilian workforce, the Air Force risks falling behind in its ability to innovate, adapt, and maintain its competitive edge.

217. In your view, do Air Force supervisors have adequate authorities to divest of a civilian employee whose performance of duty fails to meet standards or who engages in misconduct? If so, are Air Force civilian and military supervisors adequately trained to exercise of such authorities? If not, what additional authorities or training do Air Force supervisors require?

For decades, commanders and supervisors have had ineffective tools to remove under-performing civilians from service, however, the steps taken by the current administration offer potential for an improved framework. The latest guidance from OSW and OPM provide additional authorities for separation of employees with unacceptable performance and supply supervisors with additional tools to facilitate efficient employee removals. If confirmed, I look forward to working with our personnel team to further shape the Air Force implementation of these new approaches.

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.

- 218. 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?**

Yes

- 219. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and when asked before this committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate committees of Congress to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the position of the Administration?**

Yes

- 220. 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?**

Yes

- 221. 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?**

Yes

- 222. 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?**

Yes

223. 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?

Yes

224. 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?

Yes

225. 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?

Yes