Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Scott Pappano
Nominee for Appointment to be Principal Deputy Administrator for Nuclear Security, National Nuclear Security Administration

Duties and Qualifications

Section 3213 of the National Nuclear Security Administration Act states that the Principal Deputy Administrator shall be appointed "from among persons who have extensive background in organizational management and are well qualified to manage the nuclear weapons, nonproliferation, and materials disposition programs of the Administration in a manner that advances and protects the national security of the United States."

What background, experience, and expertise do you possess that qualify you for appointment to this position?

Response: My qualifications are founded upon the bedrock of a strong technical education with an undergraduate degree in marine engineering from the US Naval Academy and a graduate degree in nuclear engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Both my education and leadership were honed across a 36-year career as a nuclear submarine officer and military acquisition professional where I humbly led exceptional teams at all levels. As a submarine line officer, I completed sea rotations on five submarines across all classes, culminating in command of a nuclear attack submarine. I also served as a Military Assistant for an Assistant Secretary of Defense charged with both strategic nuclear deterrence and non-proliferation policy. As a military acquisition professional, I served as major program manager for lifecycle sustainment of operational strategic and attack submarines, oversaw research and development activities of the Naval Undersea Warfare Center labs, established a program executive office to focus on cradle-to-grave lifecycle activities for all nuclear strategic ballistic missile submarines, and eventually served as Principal Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy charged with overseeing the procurement and sustainment of all Navy and Marine Corps weapon systems. I understand the complexity of the threats and the critical importance of the NNSA mission. I have a deep understanding of Naval nuclear propulsion. I oversaw the recapitalization of our sea-based strategic nuclear deterrent and worked closely with other stakeholders engaged in nuclear modernization efforts to include STRATCOM, Strategic Systems Programs, the United Kingdom Dreadnought Alliance, and other legs of the US Nuclear Triad. I supervised contract performance at our nuclear shipbuilders and led the stand-up of a Navy industrial base team to collaborate with Department of Defense stakeholders and Congress to target industrial base investment in critical infrastructure, supply chain capacity and resilience, manufacturing technology, and workforce development. I believe that, if confirmed, my background, experience, and expertise would be well-suited to execute the duties of NNSA Principal Deputy Administrator.

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

Response: If confirmed as NNSA Principal Deputy, I will be responsible for executing duties and responsibilities as prescribed by the Administrator in support of maintaining and enhancing the safety, security, and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile; reducing the global danger from weapons of mass destruction; providing the U.S. Navy with safe and militarily effective nuclear propulsion; and responding to nuclear and radiological emergencies. I would be required to act for, and exercise the powers of, the Administrator when the Administrator is disabled or the position is vacant.

Section 3213 goes on to state that the Principal Deputy Administrator "shall perform such duties and exercise such powers as the Administrator may prescribe, including the coordination of activities among the elements of the Administration."

If confirmed, what additional duties and responsibilities, if any, do you expect that the Administrator for Nuclear Security would prescribe for you?

Response: If confirmed, and subject to the authorities of the Administrator, I would expect to oversee the implementation and accountability of contracts, procurement, administrative, budget, and planning activities. In addition to coordinating activities among the elements of the Administration, I would be required to engage with other key leaders across the Department of Energy, as well as external stakeholders, to ensure collaborative efforts to drive for resiliency, efficiency, and innovation across the nuclear weapons enterprise.

If confirmed, what would be your main priorities be in this position?

Response: If confirmed, my main priority would be to maximize the efficiency, effectiveness, capability, and capacity of NNSA, national security labs, plants, and production facilities to achieve priorities established by Administrator for nuclear stockpile stewardship, nuclear weapons production, critical infrastructure recapitalization, non-proliferation and counter-proliferation activities, and advancing technology and innovation.

What are the major challenges you would expect to confront if confirmed as the Principal Deputy Administrator?

Response: NNSA is currently executing seven simultaneous stockpile modernization programs while also recapitalizing its aging and deteriorating production infrastructure and design, certification, and assessment capabilities to support the current and future deterrent. Additionally, nuclear proliferation challenges are rising because of the evolving geopolitical environment.

If confirmed, how would you address these challenges?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with the Administrator, the NNSA leadership team, the Secretary of Energy, the Deputy Secretary of Energy, DoD, and Congress to

recognize challenges early and implement strategies to address them.

Conflicts of Interest

Federal ethics laws, to include 18 U.S.C. §208, prohibit government employees from participating in matters where they, or certain family members or organizations with which they have certain relationships, have a financial interest.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including investments, business ties, family relationships, or other connections that could be perceived as influencing your decision making?

Response: Yes.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, that if a conflict of interest arises, you will recuse yourself from participating in any decisions regarding that specific matter?

Response: Yes.

Do you commit, without qualification, if confirmed, to decision-making on the merits and exclusively in the public interest, without regard to private gain or personal benefit?

Response: Yes.

NNSA Organization and Management Structure

The NNSA Act of 2000, as amended, establishes that the Administrator for Nuclear Security ". . . shall be subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary [of Energy]. Such authority, direction, and control may be delegated only to the Deputy Secretary of Energy, without re-delegation."

What is your view on the relationship between the Secretary of Energy and the Administrator of NNSA in statute and in recent practice?

Response: Statutorily, NNSA is subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Energy. I believe that the NNSA Administrator must have a strong and healthy relationship with the Secretary of Energy and Deputy Secretary of Energy in order for NNSA to succeed. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and the Administrator to ensure successful execution and delivery of NNSA's missions.

How is the "semi-autonomous" nature of the NNSA, as set forth in the NNSA Act, reflected in NNSA's organizational structure? What makes NNSA different from

the domains of the other Under Secretaries of the Department of Energy (DOE)—in both law and practice?

Response: The NNSA Act provides the guidance and authority necessary for the NNSA Administrator to carry out NNSA's various missions under the direction of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary. The NNSA Act provides that the NNSA has full authority over and is responsible for the core functions of the NNSA which include: maintaining the safety, security and effectiveness of the nuclear deterrent; preventing, countering and responding to proliferation and terrorism threats; and providing operational support for naval nuclear propulsion. To carry out those core missions, the NNSA Act further provides that the NNSA Administrator has full responsibility for the following areas that support performance of the core functions: budget formulation and execution, personnel, health and environmental safety, emergency management, procurement, legal, legislative matters, and public affairs. For all other DOE organizations over which the Under Secretaries have cognizance, all of these core functions are performed centrally by DOE support organizations. Finally, all NNSA federal personnel and NNSA contractors are subject only to the direction and control of the Administrator, who is accountable to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary.

With a view to improving organizational management and operational effectiveness, would you recommend the Administrator pursue any changes to the structure of NNSA?

Response: If confirmed, I will focus on strengthening the coordination and integration of activities across NNSA's nuclear security enterprise to bolster the organization's ability to deliver in line with its commitments. I will work with the Administrator and NNSA leadership to enable productive relationships across NNSA's laboratories, plants, and sites, and with interagency partners while also fostering a strong culture of accountability, responsibility, and efficiency.

Relationships

Please describe your understanding of the relationship of the Principal Deputy Administrator with the following officials:

The Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Energy

Response: If confirmed, I will report through the Administrator to the Deputy Secretary of Energy and the Secretary of Energy. In the Administrator's absence, I will represent NNSA.

The Administrator for Nuclear Security

Response: If confirmed, I will report directly to the Administrator.

The Deputy Administrators of the NNSA

Response: If confirmed, I will work with the Deputy Administrators to support the execution of their respective missions.

The Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management

Response: If confirmed, I will interact with the Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management on environmental management issues that overlap with NNSA.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Deterrence, Chemical and Biological Defense Policy and Programs

Response: NNSA's Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs serves as the primary point of contact with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Deterrence, Chemical and Biological Defense Policy and Programs. If confirmed, I will support the Administrator and NNSA's priorities with the Assistant Secretary, as appropriate.

The Chairman of the Nuclear Weapons Council

Response: The Administrator is a member of the Nuclear Weapons Council. If confirmed, I will support the Administrator and NNSA's priorities to the Chairman of the Nuclear Weapons Council.

The Commander of United States Strategic Command

Response: If confirmed, I will support the Administrator and NNSA's priorities to the Commander of United States Strategic Command.

The nuclear directorates of the Air Force and Navy

Response: If confirmed, I will support the Administrator and NNSA's priorities to the nuclear directorates of the Air Force and Navy.

The Associate Administrator of NNSA for Acquisition and Project Management

Response: I understand NNSA reorganized its Office of Acquisition and Project Management to the Office of Infrastructure and the Office of Partnership Acquisition Services. If confirmed, I will support the Administrator by providing management oversight for the Associate Administrator for Infrastructure and the Associate Administrator for Partnership Acquisition Services.

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board

Response: If confirmed, I will support the Administrator and NNSA's priorities to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

Relationship with the Department of Defense (DOD)

If confirmed, you will support the Administrator in his role as a member of the Nuclear Weapons Council (NWC), together with the Under Secretaries of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, Policy, and Research and Engineering, as well as the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command. Since the 1946 Atomic Energy Act, when it was designated as the "Military Liaison Committee," the primary purpose of the NWC is to serve as the civilian-military interface and set the military requirements for the nuclear weapons stockpile, which form the basis of the core mission of NNSA. The Department of Defense (DOD) is, in a sense, NNSA's primary customer.

How would you assess the relationship between NNSA and the DOD, at both senior management levels, as well as at working levels?

Response: Coming from the Navy and having worked on a major future leg of the deterrent, I have been able to witness these relationships first-hand. From my current perspective, NNSA and DoD integrate their work well and maintain a positive working relationship. This collaboration will be essential to manage the increased demands being placed on the nuclear security enterprise. It is imperative that NNSA and DoD continue to integrate their unique capabilities, responsibilities, and schedules to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent.

If confirmed, what steps would you recommend to improve this relationship?

Response: If confirmed, I plan to maintain regular engagements with my DoD counterparts. I hope to use my previous experience within DoD to foster a positive and proactive relationship in support of NNSA's role as a dynamic partner.

Do you believe that NNSA is adequately responsive to the requirements set by the DOD?

Response: Yes, but I recognize the shifting strategic environment has increased demands on the nuclear security enterprise. If confirmed, my goal is to maintain continual communication and collaboration with DoD, ensure that DoD requirements are appropriately informed by the nuclear security enterprise's design and production capacity, and, if necessary, improve NNSA's ability to rapidly respond to DoD requirements.

Do you believe it important for the NWC to ensure the NNSA is adequately funded through the interagency budget process to meet DOD's requirements?

Response: Having been the Program Executive Officer for Strategic Submarines, I recognize the breadth of the NNSA portfolio and the requirement for NNSA to maintain a budget capable of supporting activities necessary to meet DoD requirements. If

confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary of Energy, the Office of Management and Budget, and the NWC to ensure NNSA alignment with the DoD.

NNSA Budget

The workload of the NNSA has seen an unprecedented increase over the past several years, a increase that is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. However, growth in the NNSA budget has consistently failed to keep pace with inflation and failed to fully resource a variety of projects understood to be critical capability needs, such as tritium and conventional high explosives production.

Multiple independent commissions, including Congressional Commissions on the National Defense Strategy, Reforms to the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution, and Strategic Posture of the United States have highlighted that U.S. defense investments are inadequate for addressing the international security threats facing the United States. These conclusions have been echoed by many members of Congress.

Do you agree that sustained real growth in the defense budget, including the national security functions of the Department of Energy, of at least 3 to 5 percent is necessary to meet global security challenges without incurring significant additional risk?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to the details on budget development for the national security functions of DOE. If confirmed, I will work with the Administrator, the Secretary of Energy, the Deputy Secretary of Energy, and the Office of Management and Budget to request the funding necessary for NNSA to achieve its national security missions.

10 U.S.C. 179 requires the Nuclear Weapons Council to examine the NNSA budget before its submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to ensure it can meet DOD requirements, and provide confirmation of such review to Congress.

If confirmed, do you commit, without qualification, to complying with the requirements of 10 U.S.C. 179 with regard to the annual NWC examination of the NNSA budget prior to its submission to OMB?

Response: Yes.

How would you support the Administrator in ensuring compliance with this provision, including providing the NWC with adequate time to review the budget before its submission to OMB?

Response: In my current capacity, I have not been briefed on this process. If confirmed, I will work with the Administrator, the NWC, and the Secretary of Energy to ensure compliance with this provision.

If confirmed, what standards would you recommend the Administrator employ in measuring the adequacy of the NNSA budget?

Response: Measuring the adequacy of the NNSA budget requires considering how well the implementation of NNSA strategy documents meets statutory requirements and achieves the goals of the Administration. If confirmed, I look forward to evaluating NNSA's budget in cooperation with my departmental and interagency counterparts and establishing the budget levels required to fulfill NNSA's statutory and administrative objectives.

Nuclear Policy and Modernization

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

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

Response: Yes. Our nuclear deterrent has been the backbone of U.S. national defense for decades, and its modernization is essential. NNSA must continue to deliver a safe, secure, and effective stockpile to the DoD. If confirmed, I commit to supporting this critical mission.

If confirmed, do you commit to support and advocate for full funding for efforts to comprehensively modernize the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile, including supplemental capabilities like the warhead for the sea-launched cruise missile, the supporting sustainment and production infrastructure, and experimental capabilities, and accelerate such programs wherever possible?

Response: Yes, if confirmed, I will help advance the modernization of the U.S. nuclear stockpile, including SLCM-N, and the facilities and capabilities across the enterprise that underpin the deterrent.

In its unanimous bipartisan conclusions, the 2023 Strategic Posture Commission (SPC) highlighted the rapidly growing threats facing the United States, now and in the coming decades from China's unprecedented nuclear and military force expansion, Russia's aggression and investment in destabilizing strategic capabilities, and growing regional nuclear and missile threats from North Korea and Iran. To address these threats, the SPC recommended, among other steps, that the U.S. should expedite its ongoing nuclear force modernization activities, modify its strategic nuclear force structure to account for the rapid growth of China's nuclear forces and the unprecedented need to

deter two nuclear-armed peer adversaries, and urgently develop additional theater range nuclear options.

Do you agree with the conclusions of the SPC regarding global threats to U.S. interests?

Response: Yes, I agree with the SPC's conclusions about global threats to U.S. interests, the challenges posed by two near-peer, nuclear-armed adversaries, and the risk of coordinated or opportunistic aggression. If confirmed, I will consider what efforts NNSA has already undertaken to respond to such challenges and how NNSA can harness its unique assets and workforce to promote peace through strength and enable a more stable global environment.

What is your understanding of how Russia, China, and North Korea have expanded and/or modernized their nuclear force capabilities?

Response: The geopolitical threat landscape is dynamic, and in recent years its complexity has only increased. If confirmed, I will support NNSA's efforts to maintain America's technological superiority over our adversaries and ensure that they cannot gain a strategic advantage. I will also seek relevant briefings on nuclear threats to ensure that NNSA's work is aligned with the requirement to deter and counter potential threats to U.S. interests.

In your view, how does NNSA support strategic competition with the countries highlighted by the SPC and contribute to the overall national security of the United States?

Response: NNSA's multiple nuclear-related missions support the Nation's nuclear deterrent, U.S. counterterrorism and counterproliferation goals, nonproliferation, arms control, and militarily effective naval nuclear propulsion. Each of these efforts allows the United States to project power and influence well beyond its shores, and all make positive contributions to the nation's safety and security. Each of these key mission areas contribute to a strong national defense and cause adversaries to question whether they can match our nation in the nuclear domain.

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

Response: Yes, collaboration with the United Kingdom is a key element of our national security. As one of the United States' longest and most reliable partners, continued cooperation with the United Kingdom on the capabilities and technologies that underpin our respective nuclear deterrents advances out mutual defense and security.

Past administrations have conducted Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) to define the upcoming overarching U.S. nuclear policy and strategy. The last NPR, conducted in 2022 by the Biden administration, emphasized the importance of modernizing our stockpile,

NNSA facilities, and the workforce. Although the Secretary of Defense is the primary cabinet official responsible for policymaking regarding nuclear weapons, the support of the Secretary of Energy and the Administrator for Nuclear Security are crucial to successful execution of the nuclear mission.

If confirmed, what role, if any, would you expect the Administrator to assign to you in the conduct of the Trump administration's NPR, should it choose to conduct one?

Response: If confirmed, pending any new NPR deliberations, I will work with the Administrator to determine what duties and responsibilities I could best execute to support this Administration in its efforts to modernize the U.S. nuclear deterrent and promote peace through strength.

If confirmed, what changes to the policies outlined by the 2022 NPR would you recommend the Trump administration consider?

Response: I am not yet aware of what deliberations may be occurring regarding a planned or future NPR. I support full scope modernization of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, its triad, nuclear command, control, and communications, and the infrastructure and scientific capabilities that support a safe, secure, reliable and effective nuclear stockpile. If confirmed, I would prioritize the necessary briefings to understand the complex threats posed to the United States and how the nuclear security enterprise, in coordination with DoD, can best deter those threats.

Should the upcoming NPR call for the development of additional nuclear capabilities, will you commit, if confirmed, to supporting those additions and ensuring that NNSA fully supports the new requirements?

Response: Yes.

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

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

Response: The decision to pursue future arms control agreements will be made by the President. If confirmed, I look forward to working with partners at other agencies, including State, the Intelligence Community, and Defense, to support the President in this area. I will also leverage NNSA's unique expertise and capabilities to develop monitoring and verification tools, including the ability to unilaterally monitor activities, so that the United States is prepared to meet future arms control opportunities and challenges.

Nuclear Weapons Council

In your view, what are the most significant issues the Council should take up in the coming years?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to supporting the NNSA Administrator, broadening my knowledge of the nuclear security enterprise, and collaborating with my fellow DoD colleagues through the NWC. While I am not currently informed of internal deliberations of the NWC, I do believe that the NWC should take a strategic approach to prioritizing the execution of the existing Program of Record. The NWC should continue to identify opportunities to accelerate the Program of Record, but equal attention to the recapitalization of the enterprise is required to secure NNSA's ability to continue serving the deterrent into the future.

If confirmed, will you commit to fully supporting the Administrator's participation in NWC matters?

Response: Yes.

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

Response: Yes.

The Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act restructured the existing Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs into the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Deterrence, Chemical, and Biological Defense Policy and Programs. Congress took this action to cut through bureaucratic stovepipes in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and designate a single official as the principal civilian staff assistant responsible for nuclear policies, programs, and operations.

What is your understanding of the role of this position in relation to the Nuclear Weapons Council and with regard to the overall DOD relationship with the NNSA?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to engagements with my counterparts as they implement this restructuring and aim to support further coordination between our organizations. I will support the Administrator and work with DoD partners to streamline communications between DoD and NNSA.

Defense Programs

Do you believe that the United States currently possesses the capabilities to ensure the stockpile is safe, secure, and reliable – without the need to resume nuclear explosive testing?

Response: Yes, and I agree with the nominee for NNSA Administrator's position on this matter. For nearly 30 years, the three national security laboratory directors and the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command have annually assessed the nuclear stockpile and determined that it remains safe, secure, and effective, with no technical issue that would require a return to underground nuclear explosive testing. The confidence provided by this annual assessment process has, in part, allowed the United States to continue observing an enduring moratorium on nuclear tests since 1992. If confirmed, I will continue to support the annual assessment process and will ensure NNSA continues to adhere to nuclear test readiness requirements while supporting a rigorous and effective Stockpile Stewardship Program.

What is your understanding of the current nuclear weapons stockpile modernization plan?

Response: I understand that NNSA is currently focused on delivering modernized warheads across all three legs of the nuclear triad in alignment with our DoD partners and continues to meet all DoD requirements. The current program of record includes weapons that have already been delivered such as the B61-12 and W88 Alt 370; weapons in advanced development and production stages that will soon be delivered such as the B61-13 and W80-4; and weapons in earlier stages of design and engineering that will be delivered in the 2030s, such as the W87-1, W93, and the warhead for the SLCM-N. These programs are all dependent on the recapitalization of infrastructure for producing weapons components and designing, certifying, and assessing these modernized warheads in addition to our existing stockpile. While I am encouraged by the nuclear security enterprise's responsiveness in rapidly standing up the B61-13 and SLCM-N programs to meet emerging requirements, deterrence is not static. Rather, it is a condition that must continually be maintained. I am certain that NNSA will need to be agile in responding to new DoD requirements as the security environment and the threats posed by our adversaries evolve.

Do you have any concerns with this level of effort required of NNSA and, in particular, concurrency between the plants and the laboratories?

Response: I have a high degree of confidence that NNSA and its nuclear security enterprise will be able to meet the challenge of delivering the growing program of record on time and on budget. If confirmed, I will reinforce the Administrator's enterprise-wide coordination efforts and work closely with my counterparts across the enterprise to ensure we remain aligned in our efforts and continue building on the progress we've made toward achieving our ambitious modernization and infrastructure recapitalization schedules.

Congress has authorized the Stockpile Responsiveness Program for the last several years in order to exercise design and engineering skills in support of the nuclear weapons mission, but this authority has not been fully utilized by NNSA.

If confirmed, how would you support the Stockpile Responsiveness Program and make full use of the authorities it provides NNSA?

Response: The Stockpile Responsiveness Program (SRP) is among NNSA's most critical mechanisms for developing innovative technology, prototypes, and new capabilities needed to meet the emerging security environment. It also serves to develop talented nuclear security professionals. If confirmed, I will support the Administrator's goals for fully leveraging the SRP.

If confirmed, what are your long-term plans for the National Ignition Facility and other critical experimental facilities?

Response: The National Ignition Facility (NIF) is the world's highest energy laser and is one of the most important parts of NNSA's science-based stockpile stewardship program. It remains unrivaled due to the environments that are created, which were previously only possible with underground nuclear testing. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on NNSA's current long-term plans for NIF and other critical experimental facilities and to working with the Administrator, NNSA subject matter experts, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and Congress to determine any required updates to these plans.

What are your views of the Advanced Computing Program and what is your vision for the use of advanced computing in furtherance of NNSA missions?

Response: I understand that NNSA's Advanced Simulation and Computing Program has delivered unparalleled modeling and simulation capabilities that provide new insights into complex interactions within the nuclear weapons explosion process. As we deliver the current modernization programs of record and consider new weapon programs to meet emerging needs, I anticipate we will need even more powerful computing capabilities to run even more advanced physics models to ensure U.S. nuclear weapons remain safe, reliable, and able to meet DoD requirements. This will be especially true as NNSA integrates artificial intelligence and quantum computing capabilities. If confirmed, I will work with the NNSA Administrator to fully leverage the laboratories' deployed high-performance computing capabilities as well as acquire necessary new capabilities.

What role do you see in the application of artificial intelligence and machine learning tools in support of NNSA missions?

Response: Artificial intelligence (AI) has possible applications that may significantly advance national security activities. Integrating AI-based tools with NNSA's world-leading high-performance computing capabilities could enable greater efficiency in optimizing designs and discovering new materials to produce nuclear weapons components, which could accelerate the path from new concepts to delivering capabilities. If confirmed, I will work with the Administrator to accelerate integration of AI and machine learning applications to support NNSA's stockpile modernization and

sustainment mission, as well as its nonproliferation, counterproliferation, and other critical objectives.

The NNSA depends upon a unique mix of private sector and government sources for research, development, and manufacture of critical technologies to support its national security missions. However, U.S. superiority in key areas of innovation is decreasing or has disappeared. Our competitors are engaging in aggressive military modernization and advanced weaponry development. Much of the innovation in critical technologies suitable for national defense purposes is occurring outside of the traditional defense industry.

In your view, what technologies do you see as having the greatest impact on the missions of the NNSA in the future?

Response: AI and machine learning technologies hold vast potential for allowing NNSA to improve the nuclear security enterprise's existing systems and advance our modernization efforts. Fully integrating these tools into the enterprise will allow us to leverage the significant advantage we maintain over our adversaries in historical nuclear test data and production data to make nuclear weapon design and manufacturing faster and more efficient. If confirmed, I will work alongside the NNSA Administrator and coordinate with NNSA's labs, plants, and sites to ensure we use these technologies appropriately for our national security missions.

Do you believe NNSA is effectively developing this technology in comparison to our adversaries?

Response: I do not yet have insight into activities NNSA may be undertaking to develop this technology, but like the nominee for NNSA Administrator, I recognize the need to compete aggressively with our adversaries in this field. If confirmed, fully understanding this question will be a priority for me, and I will immediately seek to understand NNSA's efforts to date.

Are NNSA's investments in these technologies appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all of the administration's missions and with the DOD, where appropriate?

Response: If confirmed, I will diligently support and amplify the NNSA Administrator's efforts to coordinate technology investments across the nuclear security enterprise and with our DoD partners.

In general, do you see NNSA as a good partner for innovative, private sector entities?

Response: Yes. I believe that the unique and challenging work being done at NNSA's labs, plants and sites creates unique opportunities for private sector innovation and requires public-private collaboration. If confirmed, I will work with the Administrator

and leadership at the labs, plants, and sites to enhance collaboration with the private sector to advance our world-class scientific preeminence.

What steps would you take to improve the NNSA's ability to engage industry, particularly innovative firms outside the traditional Nuclear Security Enterprise?

Response: Details about NNSA's engagements with industry partners are not yet available to me, but I understand that NNSA maintains strong engagement with industry partners on available contracting opportunities through various formal and informal means. If confirmed, I commit to soliciting feedback and suggestions from industry partners and implementing lessons learned from previous contract competitions.

Construction and Project Management

NNSA has been plagued by cost overruns, schedule delays, and project cancellations related to the construction of nuclear facilities, including the Uranium Processing Facility, the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility, and the High Explosive Synthesis, Formulation, and Production Facility.

In your opinion, what are the primary causes of these repeated failures in project management?

Response: NNSA's large construction projects face cost overruns and schedule delays. This is due to several factors, including contractor underperformance, lack of effective federal oversight, supply chain challenges leading to delays in procurement, and contracts structured in ways that insufficiently incentivize performance. COVID-19 and economic conditions have also contributed to challenges facing these projects. If confirmed, I commit to advancing these important projects in support of our national security.

In your view, are the changes in NNSA project management practices undertaken over the last few years sufficient to address these problems?

Response: NNSA is improving its project management practices, but I recognize the need for further efforts in this area. If confirmed, I plan to seek out opportunities to leverage innovative strategies to deliver NNSA's mission more efficiently.

If not, what additional steps would you take, if confirmed, to improve the availability of highly qualified talent capable of managing intensive capital infrastructure projects?

Response: NNSA's infrastructure projects cannot be successful without qualified professionals. If confirmed, I will support efforts to recruit and retain talented individuals with commercial project management experience. I am also committed to developing effective teams to address our most pressing challenges in partnerships with the labs, plants, and sites.

If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to ensure that these project management failures are not repeated in the future?

Response: NNSA must balance minimizing burdensome oversight requirements with ensuring optimal oversight to improve project performance. If confirmed, I am committed to holding the individuals responsible for project management accountable, acting decisively when necessary, implementing lessons learned, improving cost estimating procedures, and identifying and taking advantage of opportunities for acceleration.

What specific change in policy, practice, organization, or regulation would you recommend in furtherance of this effort?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to taking stock of NNSA's current initiatives and policies to identify opportunities for improvement. I plan to refine policy to help the agency more accurately estimate costs, eliminate redundant requirements, and streamline acquisition and project management processes. Additionally, I will ensure that contracts are structured to incentivize performance.

In your view, does the Administrator for Nuclear Security need any additional authorities or flexibilities to address the root causes of these project management failures? Please explain your answer.

Response: My understanding is that DOE Order 413.3B governs program and project management for capital assets across the department, including at NNSA. Applying thorough project management processes is key to minimizing risk and delivering capabilities in time to meet the needs they are intended to address at an acceptable cost. I support the recent memorandum released by Energy Secretary Wright, which prioritizes efficiency and mission execution at our national labs. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on how this applies to NNSA's infrastructure modernization efforts and working together to identify additional opportunities for implementing process changes in support of effective, efficient project management.

In 2014, largely in response to a string of the large project management failures, Congress created the Office of Cost Estimation and Program Evaluation (CEPE) in the Department of Energy. CEPE was modeled on the DOD Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE).

In your view, is CEPE sufficiently staffed to effectively provide the Administrator for Nuclear Security with costing and project management advice on the variety of projects within NNSA?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to NNSA's staffing details. I am also aware that, if confirmed, I will also serve as the Federal Salaries and Expenses Account Integrator and will oversee staffing needs for all of NNSA. I will ensure that CEPE is appropriately staffed to support the Administrator.

Does CEPE have sufficient authority and access to DOE data and information to serve its statutory purpose?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to the procedures for accessing DOE data. I understand the importance of data in executing NNSA's statutory mission. I understand that data is key for CEPE's ability to provide independent advisement to me, the Administrator, NWC, and Congress. If confirmed, I will review whether CEPE has sufficient authority and access.

CEPE reports directly to the Administrator for Nuclear Security. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that CEPE has adequate access to information and senior leaders in your organization, as necessary and appropriate?

Response: If confirmed, I will have regular engagements with CEPE and ensure access to senior leaders in order for CEPE to conduct its work and provide valuable insight for decision-making.

If confirmed, specifically how would you undertake to support and sustain CEPE capabilities and independence?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to all of the capabilities that CEPE possesses. If confirmed, I will seek to better understand these unique and important capabilities and take the actions needed to maintain them.

Plutonium Strategy

NNSA has selected two sites for plutonium pit production: Los Alamos will produce approximately 30 pits per year and the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) will produce up to 50 pits per year, for a projected two-site total of no fewer than 80 pits per year. These production targets were established several years ago, prior to revelations about the speed and scope of potential adversary nuclear force expansions.

Do you believe and overall production target of no fewer than 80 pits per year is sufficient to meet future demands for modernizing and adapting the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile?

Response: I am unaware of internal discussions regarding production targets to meet the current and future demands of the U.S. nuclear deterrent. If confirmed, I plan to work closely with the NNSA Administrator and laboratory, plant, and site leadership across the nuclear security enterprise to achieve full rate production and pursue opportunities to accelerate the production capability in support of the nuclear deterrent.

Do you support the two-site solution, initiated under President Trump's first term, for meeting statutory requirements for pit production?

Response: Yes, I support NNSA's two-site approach to supply no fewer than 80 war reserve plutonium pits.

What are your views on the January 16, 2025, district court settlement halting installation of classified equipment and construction of associated facilities at SRPPF until such time as NNSA prepares a new Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement?

Response: I am aware that the settlement agreement that brought an end to the lawsuit challenging the National Environmental Protection Act work done in support of pit production was mutually agreed upon by the NNSA and the plaintiffs. Per the Agreement, NNSA will conduct a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and issue a Record of Decision based on the findings of the PEIS. The department agreed to complete this process within two and a half years and provide for enhanced public participation. If confirmed, I plan to carefully track this matter to ensure that pit production and the specific SRPPF project are not negatively affected.

What are your views on the Los Alamos site and its capabilities to achieve its pits per year production target to support the demands of the ongoing stockpile program?

Response: I congratulate NNSA, LANL, and the nuclear security enterprise on producing the first war reserve plutonium pit for the W87-1 last year. If confirmed, I will support the Administrator to prioritize and accelerate the production capacity required to support the nuclear deterrent.

SRPPF has been plagued by issues with design and construction since the decision was made to convert the partially completed Mixed Oxide Fabrication Facility into a facility for producing plutonium pits. The project also experienced significant cost growth and delays due to impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic spike in inflation.

What is your understanding of the status of SRPPF and the project's likelihood of supporting NNSA efforts to meet the statutory requirement to produce no fewer than 80 plutonium pits per year?

Response: My understanding is that SRPPF will allow NNSA to produce at least 50 war reserve pits per year. I am also cognizant that NNSA must mitigate further schedule delays and cost growth.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to improve the performance of the project, both in terms of cost management and construction efficiency?

Response: If confirmed, I will ensure NNSA's contract structures properly hold contractors accountable for their performance as well as incentivize efforts to accelerate project schedules and decrease costs.

Uranium Strategy and Tritium Production

Since the United States Enrichment Corporation (USEC) ceased enrichment operations in 2013, DOE has relied on the existing stockpile of highly enriched uranium (HEU) to support Naval Nuclear Propulsion, as well as the down-blending of recycled HEU to meet requirements for unobligated LEU for tritium production, but the available supply of HEU is finite. To address this supply limitation, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 National Defense Authorization (NDAA) directed the Secretary of Energy to identify two to four sites for reestablishing unobligated domestic uranium enrichment, for both defense and civilian energy purposes, with an eye to begin construction no later than 2027.

If confirmed, will you support the Secretary of Energy in meeting the requirement in the FY 2025 NDAA outlined above?

Response: Yes, if confirmed, I am eager to learn more about NNSA's current plans to support departmental leadership in meeting this requirement.

The FY 2025 NDAA specified that plans for reestablishing the enrichment capability should focus on "modular, scalable facilities". What are your ideas for how to proceed with such an effort?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed with the NNSA Administrator on how NNSA can best reestablish a domestic uranium enrichment capability in a flexible and resilient manner to meet defense mission requirements and the requirements in the FY 2025 NDAA.

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report in 2014 entitled "Interagency Review Needed to Update U.S. Position on Enriched Uranium That Can Be Used for Tritium Production" concluded that the DOE's policy on identification of obligated uranium was based on three international agreements and a series of policy decisions. Of the three agreements, GAO concluded that only one explicitly addressed tritium production, but that past State Department findings had consistently interpreted the other two agreements as imposing peaceful use restrictions on LEU for tritium production.

Do you believe this GAO reading of all three agreements remains consistent with U.S. policy goals? In your view, should the State Department's prior findings be reevaluated?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on this report. I do know that ensuring a consistent and continued supply of tritium is critical to the deterrent. I will support the NNSA Administrator in determining whether future actions are necessary. I will also work with the Administrator to ensure NNSA's production of tritium remains consistent with U.S. governmental policy and international agreements. I also understand that the views of international partners and the U.S. interagency may have changed in the time since this report was released and it would be worth reengaging our domestic and foreign partners to assess consistency with U.S. policy goals.

Section 3138 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 directed the Department of Energy to "determine whether the Agreement [between the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland] for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes, signed at Washington, July 3, 1958, . . . permits the United States to obtain low-enriched uranium for the purposes of producing tritium in the United States." The Secretary of Energy affirmed that such procurement of low enriched uranium can occur.

What are your views on the accuracy of the Secretary of Energy's determination in this regard?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary and the Administrator to evaluate the previous determination. Ultimately, I seek to maintain our mutually beneficial partnership with the United Kingdom.

Fissile Materials Disposition

The United States and Russia committed to the disposition of 34 metric tons of weapons grade plutonium under the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (PMDA) in 2000. The original plan by the United States was to convert excess weapons grade plutonium to mixed oxide reactor fuel for civilian reactors at the Savannah River Site (SRS). After spending billions of dollars, and following Russia's withdrawal from the PMDA in 2016, this project was abandoned in favor of diluting the plutonium and disposing of it at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The dilute and dispose process involves shipping the plutonium pits from Pantex to Los Alamos to be turned into oxide powder, then shipping then on to SRS for packaging, followed by final shipment to WIPP for disposal.

Do you believe the United States should continue to dispose of its stockpiles of weapons-grade plutonium despite Russia's abrogation of the PMDA?

Response: If confirmed, I will continue NNSA's work to remove excess plutonium from South Carolina, consistent with the DOE-South Carolina Settlement Agreement. Regarding NNSA's broader excess plutonium disposition work, I will work with interagency partners to assess whether the United States should continue to comply with PMDA unilaterally.

What are your views on the dilute and disposal method?

Response: I am not currently privy to the details of the program. If confirmed, I look forward to being informed of the details of this program so that I can provide effective executive leadership.

What are your views on permanent disposal at WIPP?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to the details of the program, though I understand that dilute and dispose, NNSA's program of record for plutonium disposition, includes disposal at WIPP. If confirmed, I look forward to familiarizing myself with the details of this program so that I can provide effective executive leadership.

What are your views of the logistics of shipping plutonium between Pantex, Los Alamos, SRS, and WIPP? In your opinion, could this process be simplified by shipping the pits directly to SRS to be converted to oxide powder there?

Response: I am not currently privy to the details of the program. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed the details of this program so that I can provide effective executive leadership.

What are your views on reprocessing as an alternative to dilution and disposal?

Response: While I am not currently privy to the details of this program, I do know that changing NNSA's technical approach to plutonium disposition could be costly and could create challenges relative to the DOE-South Carolina Settlement Agreement.

Nuclear Safety and Security

NNSA was created partially in response to security lapses at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Nonetheless, periodic security lapses have continued to occur, risking exposure of some of our nation's most closely guarded secrets.

To what extent have the conditions that allowed such lapses to occur been corrected, in your view?

Response: I am dedicated to the continuous enhancement of security across all NNSA laboratories, plants, and sites, but I do not have details regarding current security infrastructure. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on existing security measures and related operations.

Section 3112 of the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act prohibits the Secretary of Energy or the Administrator for Nuclear Security, after April 15, 2025, from admitting citizens or agents of the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or the Islamic Republic of Iran to any national security laboratory, nuclear weapons production facility, or any site that supports the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program.

If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring full compliance with this provision across NNSA by the statutorily directed April 15, 2025, date for implementation?

Response: Yes.

In your view, are there further changes in policy, practice, management, or oversight to reduce the frequency of security issues at NNSA facilities that should be considered?

Response: I am not aware of any current security infraction that prompted this change; however, if confirmed, I will seek briefings on the NNSA's adherence to this prohibition and any additional measures that should be taken to protect operations. I am committed to close collaboration with Congress to guarantee the robust protection of NNSA's labs, plants, and sites. We must ensure that no adversary gains unauthorized access, except as explicitly required by current or future treaty obligations.

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

If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure the NNSA appropriately prioritizes and resources detection and defeat capabilities for UAS that pose a threat to NNSA facilities and assets?

Response: Protecting NNSA facilities and assets from Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS) threats is a top priority. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on NNSA's UAS detection and defeat capabilities. I will also reinforce our collaborative efforts with other agencies to proactively address evolving threats and leverage the latest Counter UAS (CUAS) technologies.

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

Response: Yes.

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board and NNSA's Office of Enterprise Assessments have periodically reported accidents at various Department of Energy facilities over recent years, including explosions, radiation exposure, and leakage of hazardous materials – putting both personnel and the mission at risk. Yet, while personnel safety is critically important, the nuclear mission by definition involves some of the most hazardous materials on earth. Consequently, acceptance of a measure of risk is a prerequisite to accomplish NNSA's assigned missions.

How should we balance safety, risk, and mission at NNSA facilities?

Response: The production, handling, and disposal of nuclear materials inherently involve significant risks. Therefore, prudent risk management of safety, programmatic, and other regulatory initiatives is achieved by maintaining vigilant and continuous oversight, supported by robust risk controls. If confirmed, I am committed to prioritizing safety

across the organization, ensuring that risks are identified and effectively minimized while NNSA continues to successfully execute its critical and time-sensitive mission.

If confirmed, what steps would you recommend to improve the safety culture at the various NNSA labs and sites while still meeting mission requirements?

Response: The actions of senior leadership to establish and reinforce safety expectations are essential to cultivating a positive safety environment. I will work closely with the NNSA Administrator to ensure these expectations are communicated effectively by partnering with the leadership of our Management and Operating partners. I will emphasize NNSA's long-term commitment to safe operations by fostering an effective governance and management culture. Additionally, I will underscore the critical importance of empowering and actively engaging employees to provide feedback, while also promoting organizational learning. Reinforcing these principles will establish a strong foundation for enhancing the safety culture. If confirmed, I will prioritize a safety-conscious work environment where employees feel comfortable raising safety concerns, knowing that leadership is prepared to address these issues effectively. Furthermore, I will support our leadership by ensuring they have the necessary resources and tools to address any safety concerns in a timely and efficient manner.

Cybersecurity

What do you see as the primary cyber policy challenges for the NNSA and what suggestions do you have for addressing them?

Response: Cybersecurity threats are rapidly changing and evolving. If confirmed, I will ensure that we work in lockstep across the enterprise, as well as with our partners around the globe, to bolster cybersecurity, meet mission needs, and promote national security.

Do you believe that the NNSA's current capabilities, policies, and authorities allow for effective cybersecurity? If not, what steps should NNSA and the Department of Energy take to address any shortfalls?

Response: I have not yet been briefed on NNSA's current cybersecurity capabilities, policies, and authorities, but, if confirmed, will prioritize cybersecurity briefings to gain a deeper understanding before determining effectiveness.

What do you conclude from the recent cyber-attacks on telecommunications infrastructure involving Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon about the state of our cyber defenses?

Response: These recent attacks show the interconnectivity between public and private sectors. These partnerships must be strong, so that communication and coordination occur, and mitigations can be implemented expeditiously. It also highlights the importance of the work NNSA must do to maintain a highly capable cybersecurity program.

If confirmed, what specific measures would you take to improve cybersecurity culture across the NNSA workforce?

Response: If confirmed, I will focus on continued collaboration among cybersecurity teams across the enterprise, departmental elements, and other government partners. I will identify opportunities to streamline operations and gain efficiencies to improve secure mission activities.

How would you empower and hold key leaders accountable for improvements in NNSA cybersecurity?

Response: I have not yet been briefed on NNSA's cybersecurity posture but will leverage my experience in different fields within the Navy to drive operational improvements across the organization, including cybersecurity. If confirmed, I will ensure NNSA empowers key leaders from the top down to be accountable for adopting essential cybersecurity tools and enforcing critical cybersecurity mitigations.

If confirmed, how do you plan to work with the Department of Defense and other agencies in the coordination of cyber security initiatives?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to remove obstacles that could impede NNSA's responsibilities to interagency partners. I understand NNSA actively collaborates with DoD and other agencies to support cybersecurity goals and explore ways to enhance the protection, exchange, and use of data.

Regulation and Oversight

Staff at NNSA's national laboratories often complain that they are overburdened by regulation and oversight, both internal and external, and that these contribute to the challenges in staying under cost and on schedule for major projects.

Do you believe that environmental, safety, and construction regulations are properly applied to NNSA projects and operations?

Response: If confirmed, I am fully committed to ensuring the safe execution of operations across the nuclear security enterprise. This includes safeguarding the workforce, the public, and the environment in a manner that aligns with and supports NNSA mission execution. I am aware of and support the Administration's initiatives aimed at streamlining permitting processes and regulations for construction projects at DOE's national laboratories.

Do you believe these regulations undermine effective performance by the labs and efficient mission execution overall?

Response: If confirmed, I will support efforts to streamline regulatory processes, standardize performance expectations, and promote a practical, common-sense approach to the interpretation and application of requirements—aimed at enhancing NNSA's efficiency, innovation, and modernization across the enterprise. While I am not currently informed of the detailed implementation of regulations throughout the enterprise, I recognize that excessively rigid interpretations of regulatory requirements can result in operational inefficiencies. I am committed to utilizing available flexibilities, such as exemptions and equivalencies, to implement necessary controls while also pursuing regulatory relief where appropriate.

In your view, are the NNSA labs and production facilities subject to the appropriate level of oversight from the NNSA, DOE, the EPA, the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and/or Congress?

Are there certain oversight processes that are unnecessarily duplicative or purely bureaucratic, in your view?

Response: DOE Order 413.3B, which governs program and project management for the acquisition of capital assets, applies to NNSA. While this order provides essential structure and oversight, I recognize that its implementation can, at times, be burdensome. If confirmed, I will remain committed to ensuring that critical work is carried out in a timely and efficient manner within the framework of this order. I will leverage my experience as an acquisition professional in the Navy to actively engage with stakeholders to identify and address any inefficiencies arising from current oversight processes, and to develop effective solutions that support mission success.

If confirmed, what changes in regulatory or oversight structures would you recommend, and why?

Response: While I am not currently aware of the details of NNSA's regulatory and oversight frameworks, if confirmed, I will actively pursue opportunities to enhance operational efficiency, including the potential reform of regulatory requirements where such changes are both practical and beneficial.

Safeguards and Security

What role, if any, will you have in ensuring safety and security in the nuclear weapons complex?

Response: I will collaborate with the Administrator to champion initiatives that enhance modernization of safety and security at NNSA facilities, fostering a robust safety and security culture built on transparency, trust, and collaboration. This includes establishing clear expectations with our partners for sustained safety performance alongside successful mission accomplishment, recognizing that these goals are mutually reinforced. Additionally, I will partner with the Administrator and the security program office to implement systems and processes that prevent security breaches. I will actively engage in

initiatives to improve security effectiveness and efficiency at all NNSA facilities. Working with our partners, we will ensure oversight practices support these objectives, driving continuous improvement in both safety and security.

In your opinion, what are the biggest safety and security threats to the facilities and materials in the nuclear weapons complex?

Response: If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Administrator to prioritize safe operations while accomplishing the mission and mitigating security threats such as cyber, material, transportation, and physical risks to NNSA. Ensuring the safety and security of NNSA's facilities and nuclear materials is paramount.

What role, if any, will you have in the NNSA's interactions with the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board?

Response: I recognize and value the importance of maintaining a constructive working relationship with the DNFSB, supported by transparent and open lines of communication. While it is my understanding that the Department's overall engagement with the Board is managed by the Deputy Secretary of Energy, if confirmed, I will work closely with the NNSA Administrator in addressing DNFSB recommendations and advice related to safety matters at defense nuclear facilities across NNSA.

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board and NNSA's Office of Enterprise Assessments have reported a number of accidents at the national laboratories in recent years that put both personnel and mission at risk. Yet, while personnel safety is critically important, the nuclear mission by definition involves some of the most hazardous materials with which we work in this country, and risk cannot be eliminated completely at the labs while continuing to accomplish the mission.

How should we balance safety, risk, and mission at the national laboratories?

Response: NNSA must maintain consistent and robust safety performance, as safety and mission success are inherently interdependent. Achieving this balance requires thorough risk understanding, along with effective control and management of those risks. If confirmed, I will remain focused on strengthening collaboration between the laboratories and production sites, while emphasizing the importance of continuous improvement in the safe and effective execution of NNSA's mission. I will be dedicated to fostering a culture that empowers employees to proactively anticipate, identify, report, and resolve safety concerns.

What steps would you recommend to improve safety culture at the labs while still meeting mission requirements?

Response: Senior leadership can cultivate a positive safety environment by establishing and reinforcing safety expectations. I will work closely with the NNSA Administrator to ensure these expectations are communicated effectively by partnering with the leadership

of our Management and Operating contractors. I will emphasize NNSA's long-term commitment to safe operations by fostering an effective governance and management culture. Additionally, I will underscore the critical importance of empowering and actively engaging employees to provide feedback, while also promoting organizational learning. Reinforcing these principles will establish a strong foundation for enhancing the safety culture. If confirmed, I will prioritize creating a safety-conscious work environment where employees feel comfortable raising safety concerns, knowing that leadership is prepared to address these issues effectively. Furthermore, I will support our leadership by ensuring they have the necessary resources and tools to address any safety concerns in a timely and efficient manner.

Nonproliferation

What do you perceive as the highest priorities of the nuclear nonproliferation programs at NNSA?

Response: The first priority is addressing the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea. If confirmed, I will leverage NNSA's unique technical capabilities to support the Administration's policy toward Iran, and to implement and verify any future nuclear dismantlement agreement with either country. The second priority is improving our ability to detect nuclear proliferation activities as early as possible, including in denied areas like space. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to develop cutting-edge technologies to detect such threats. This will provide maximum time for policymakers to formulate a response and to stop threats as far from U.S. shores as possible. The third priority is enabling the American nuclear renaissance while ensuring that U.S. nuclear exports advance our national security interests. If confirmed, I will strengthen NNSA's engagements with U.S. nuclear companies and nuclear newcomer countries, to facilitate U.S. exports while meeting the highest standards of safeguards, security, and emergency preparedness.

What challenges does the emerging multilateral nuclear competition between the U.S., China, Russia, and North Korea pose to existing nonproliferation efforts?

Response: Emerging nuclear competition and greater cooperation among U.S. adversaries in opposition to U.S. interests are among the most challenging aspects of today's geopolitical environment. This dynamic makes it more difficult to reach arms control agreements and to mount coordinated international responses to attempts by nuclear proliferant states to acquire nuclear weapons. If confirmed, I am committed to leveraging NNSA's unique capabilities to mount a multi-layered defense against nuclear proliferation, even in the face of this challenging global environment.

Do you believe additional cooperative nonproliferation efforts are feasible in light of China, Russia, and North Korea's burgeoning cooperation on nuclear technologies and materials?

Response: Cooperation among China, Russia, and North Korea poses a major challenge to nonproliferation efforts. The days when China and Russia could be counted on to stand against North Korea's violation of its Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty obligations are long gone. However, a highly dynamic global security environment can present new opportunities alongside challenges. If confirmed, I look forward to discussing such opportunities in the nonproliferation sphere at the direction of the administration.

If confirmed, what would be your nonproliferation R&D priorities?

Response: If confirmed, I will prioritize nonproliferation R&D that allows for earlier detection of global nuclear threats, including:

- Building space-based sensors for delivery to DoD for the U.S. Nuclear Detonation detection System (USNDS)
- Developing capabilities to detect and characterize foreign nuclear weapons activities;
- Improving capabilities to interdict nuclear materials outside of regulatory control; and
- Developing and advancing technical nuclear forensics analysis capabilities that can support strategic deterrence with time-critical decisions in the event of a nuclear or radiological incident.

I will also prioritize R&D that strengthens fundamental competencies at the national laboratories, so they are prepared to respond flexibly to future threats.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to improve coordination across the NNSA on nonproliferation R&D and reduce duplicative efforts?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to the details of NNSA's organizational structure for nonproliferation R&D. However, to be effective and efficient, this office must conduct its work in full coordination with all relevant offices, not just across NNSA, but across the entire U.S. Government. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on any duplicative efforts in this area and discussing efforts to increase efficiency.

Emergency Response

What is your understanding of the NNSA's roles and responsibilities with regard to responding to domestic and international radiological events?

Response: NNSA's Nuclear Emergency Support Team (NEST) is prepared to respond to radiological and nuclear emergencies that may occur around the world. Additionally, as a party to the IAEA's Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency, NNSA leads nuclear and radiological response in the international arena. This includes cooperating with other states to promptly provide assistance in such cases. In some cases that involve U.S. national security, public health and safety, and economic interests, NNSA also provides direct bilateral or multilateral

assistance to international partners. This includes forensic capabilities in support of international law enforcement efforts to investigate and attribute an incident. Domestically, NNSA oversees the Department's Emergency Operation Center and 24/7 Watch Office, which provides watch and warning, situational awareness, and decision support capabilities for domestic and international incidents.

Do you believe NNSA is adequately resourced and staffed to fulfill its existing emergency response responsibilities?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to details concerning the resources and staffing of NNSA's emergency response capabilities. Emergency response is a vital part of NNSA's mission. If confirmed, I will assess NNSA's current staffing levels and resources in this area, and work to ensure their sufficiency.

In your view, how would you characterize the allocation of roles and responsibilities across the interagency, particularly with regard to the DOD and the Department of Homeland Security?

Response: When it comes to nuclear and radiological emergency response, NNSA coordinates closely with interagency partners, especially DoD for international incidents and DHS for domestic incidents. If confirmed, I will make every effort to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear. To the extent possible, I would reduce interagency redundancies and bureaucracy so that NNSA can efficiently respond to emergencies. Leveraging decades worth of technical expertise and response capabilities, NNSA helps keep America safe, secure, and prosperous. Additionally, NNSA and its national laboratories' technical nuclear weapons program expertise allow them to assess foreign nuclear weapons programs.

If confirmed, are there any adjustments to the allocation of interagency responsibilities you would expect to recommend or pursue?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to supporting the Administrator in streamlining emergency response processes and implementing efficiencies to ensure that NNSA provides federal, state and local partners the support they need during crises. I will also support the agency's efforts to strengthen state and local response capabilities to enhance domestic resiliency.

Personnel Management

In your judgment, what is the biggest challenge facing the NNSA in effectively and efficiently managing its workforce?

Response: In terms of workforce, the biggest challenges facing NNSA are recruitment and retention of highly skilled technical employees. Factors contributing to this challenge include an aging workforce, remote duty stations with high cost of living competition

with the private sector for the same skill sets, and the requirement for high level security clearances.

What recommendations do you have to improve NNSA's management of its workforce?

Response: In my current capacity, I am unaware of NNSA's workforce management practices. If confirmed, I will work with the Administrator to effectively manage the workforce to include mitigating recruitment and retention challenges.

In your judgement, how effective is the Department of Energy and the NNSA at identifying, promoting, and rewarding top performers?

Response: I have not been briefed on the DOE's or NNSA's performance management policies and practices. However, the success of NNSA depends on its workforce. If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring NNSA's ability to recognize and reward top performers.

Similarly, how effective is the Department of Energy and the NNSA at identifying and removing underperforming or counterproductive personnel?

Response: While I am not currently privy to personnel matters at NNSA, if confirmed, I will support the Administrator in fostering a culture of accountability and performance.

If confirmed, what would you recommend be done to improve NNSA talent management?

Response: Talent management is critical to NNSA's success. If confirmed, I would adopt a holistic approach to talent management, ensuring these efforts are aligned with agency goals. This includes identifying and filling talent gaps, managing employee performance through continuous feedback and recognition, offering training and professional development opportunities, and developing a pipeline of talent for future workforce needs.

Do you believe that NNSA has the appropriate number of civilian employees to perform its mission?

Response: If confirmed, I will review NNSA's staffing and ensure it is appropriately staffed.

If not, what would be the appropriate size of the NNSA civilian workforce and what, in your view, would the additional personnel accomplish that NNSA is not able to accomplish today? If confirmed, which specific components of the NNSA would you recommend growing?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to details about NNSA's civilian

workforce. If confirmed, I will assess NNSA's staffing levels and requirements.

Do you believe that NNSA has the appropriate capabilities—in both its civilian employee and contractor workforces—to perform its mission?

Response: I am not currently privy to details about NNSA's civilian and contractor workforces, but if confirmed, I look forward to assessing NNSA's current staffing levels and future needs.

If not, please explain what capabilities each such workforce requires to ensure that NNSA is fully mission capable?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not aware of the full extent of capabilities required by the NNSA Federal and contractor workforces. However, I believe there are areas for improvement such as project management and AI. If confirmed, I will work with the Administrator in rapidly assessing and addressing these issues.

If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to retain critical nuclear weapons expertise in both NNSA the civilian and the contractor workforces?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to foster and develop internal talent pipelines at headquarters and across the nuclear security enterprise.

What programs, policies, or tools does NNSA need to better attract the diverse range of skillsets required to support the missions of the Administration to national security focused careers?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to assessing current programs, policies, and tools leveraged by NNSA to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce.

Sexual Harassment

What is your assessment of the current climate regarding sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the DOE and NNSA?

Response: I take the prevention and reporting of sexual harassment and sex discrimination seriously and, if confirmed, will continue to raise awareness and emphasize prevention at DOE and NNSA. In the event that an issue of this nature is brought to my attention, I will consult with appropriate stakeholders in DOE and NNSA and take appropriate action without delay.

If confirmed, what actions would you take were you to receive or become aware of a complaint of sexual harassment or discrimination from an employee or contractor of the DOE or NNSA?

Response: If confirmed, I will ensure that complaints of this nature receive the serious attention they deserve across the enterprise. Any contractor or federal employee who raises such an issue will be treated in accordance with all federal laws and regulations.

Relations with Congress

What are your views on the state of the relationship between the NNSA and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

Response: Support from the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), and Congress more broadly, is vital to NNSA's ability to successfully advance its missions. Given SASC's role in authorizing the activities of NNSA, I understand the importance of sustaining a strong relationship with this Committee. If confirmed, I commit to maintaining a strong relationship with the Committee during my tenure.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and the NNSA?

Response: A productive relationship with Congress depends on the unfettered exchange of information. If confirmed, I am committed to supporting NNSA's strong relationship with Congress, including this Committee, and fostering consistent, transparent communication.

The safety, security, and functionality of the United States nuclear weapons stockpile is of paramount importance to our nation's national security, and any potential issues that could undermine confidence in the reliability of U.S. nuclear forces are of the highest interest to Congress.

If confirmed, will you commit, without qualification, that you will promptly notify this Committee of any significant issues in the safety, security, or reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile?

Response: Yes.

In much the same manner as the Combatant Commanders within the Department of Defense, the Administrator for Nuclear Security is required by Section 4716 of the Atomic Energy Defense Act (50 U.S.C. 2756) to annually submit a list of priorities that were insufficiently funded by that year's budget request by the President. While unfunded requirements lists are invaluable tools in helping Congress understand executable funding opportunities, past Administrators have only sparingly fulfilled this requirement.

If confirmed, will you commit to supporting the Administrator in fully complying with the statutory requirement to submit an annual unfunded priority list to Congress with the annual budget submission of the President?

Response: Yes.

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.

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

Response: Yes.

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

Response: Yes.

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

Response: Yes.

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

Response: Yes.

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

Response: Yes.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this committee? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Response: Yes.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Response: Yes.