

Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Alexander Velez-Green
Nominee to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

Duties

Pursuant to section 137a of title 10, U.S. Code, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (DUSD(P)) serve as the first assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) and assists the Under Secretary in the performance of the duties set forth in section 134 of the code.

1. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the DUSD(P)?

My understanding of the duties and functions of the Deputy Under Secretary of War for Policy (DUSW(P)) is based on U.S. code and custom. Statutorily, the DUSW(P) serves as the “first assistant” to the Under Secretary of War for Policy (USW(P)). In this capacity, the DUSW(P) assists the USW(P) in the performance of the USW(P)’s statutory responsibilities. Those responsibilities include, under the direction of the Secretary of War, directing and supervising:

- The development and promulgation of the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and any other Departmental strategic documents;
- Representing the Department in the development of the National Security Strategy, and ensuring the integration of the Department’s activities and plans with the National Security Strategy;
- The development and promulgation of policy guidance for campaign, contingency, and operational plans, and for their review for alignment with Departmental and national policy objectives and criteria;
- The development and promulgation of policy guidance for global force posture;
- The development and promulgation of the Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) to guide the formulation of program and budget requests by the Department;
- The Department’s activities and policies regarding export controls;
- The Department’s policy, program planning, and execution, and allocation and use of resources for the Department’s activities in combating terrorism; and
- In coordination with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, for developing planning scenarios to assess the Joint Force’s capabilities and readiness and to develop and conduct assessments of progress toward meeting specific objectives the Joint Force should be ready to achieve.

In practical terms, it is my understanding that the USW(P) serves as the principal advisor to and lieutenant of the Secretary of War on matters of strategy, defense and foreign policy, and alignment of the Department’s activities with national

strategy and other elements of national power. Within the Department, that means representing the strategy and policy perspective throughout the Department's activities. Outside of the Department, it is to serve as the principal representative of the Department below the Secretary himself to the interagency process, the Congress, and foreign governments on matters of strategy and policy.

If confirmed to serve as the DUSW(P), I would be responsible for ensuring that the USW(P) is fully supported and enabled to perform these duties as effectively as possible. I would also be responsible for performing these duties, as delegated by the USW(P).

2. What is your understanding of the role of the DUSD(P) as “first assistant” to the USD(P)?

The DUSW(P) serves as the “first assistant” to the USW(P). In this capacity, the DUSW(P) is responsible for ensuring that the USW(P) is fully supported and enabled to perform his duties as effectively as possible. The DUSW(P) is also responsible for performing those duties, as delegated by the USW(P).

How a particular DUSW(P) can best serve these functions for a USW(P) depends on a variety of factors, including their respective areas of expertise, dispositions, and relations to each other as well as others in the Department and interagency. Historically, there have been instances in which the USW(P) has maintained oversight over all the Offices of the Assistant Secretaries of War (OASWs) and their equivalents in the OUSW(P), with the DUSW(P) providing support to the USW(P) in the form of advising, quality control, direct management of individual offices and OUSW(P) writ-large, and other responsibilities, including representing the USW(P) for certain functions. In other cases, the USW(P) and DUSW(P) have adopted more of a clearly defined division of labor, with each taking primary responsibility—including guidance, direction, oversight, support, accountability, clearance, and associated representational duties—for certain verticals within the OUSW(P). There have also been hybrid models, with layered oversight for certain key issue areas, and a clearer division of labor for others.

Each approach comes with certain advantages and disadvantages. These models are also dynamic, depending on the needs of the Secretary of War and the Department at a particular time. In cases, for instance, where the Secretary requires the USW(P) to give special focus to a particular set of issues, then the DUSW(P) may be required not only to support the USW(P) on that set of issues, but also to work closely with relevant OASWs to ensure that they receive the guidance, direction, oversight, and support required to keep delivering effectively across the OUSW(P) portfolio. A DUSW(P)'s ability to support the USW(P) in these scenarios, both directly and through his work with the relevant OASWs, will depend in very significant measure on the USW(P)'s trust and confidence in the DUSW(P); the DUSW(P)'s ability to advise and lead effectively across a range of substantive

areas, with consideration for relevant processes; and the strength of the DUSW(P)'s relationships in the OUSW(P), other parts of the Department, and the interagency.

If confirmed as the DUSW(P), I would work closely with the USW(P) to identify, adopt, and implement the model that best supports the USW(P)'s ability to perform his duties as effectively as possible, including by performing certain of his duties if and as delegated. My object in doing so would be to determine what the USW(P) requires in terms of support, and then orienting off that target, work closely with relevant Assistant Secretaries of War (ASWs) and their equivalents to ensure that they and their organizations have the guidance, direction, oversight, and support that they need to fulfill their responsibilities as effectively as possible on the USW(P)'s behalf, all in direct alignment with the Secretary's intent.

3. If confirmed, what specific additional duties might you expect the USD(P) to prescribe for you?

I am not aware of any additional duties and responsibilities that would be prescribed by the USW(P), but I would be prepared to assume additional ones that are compatible with effectively meeting the core responsibilities and duties of the position.

Qualifications

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

I am humbled by the President's confidence in nominating me for the role of the DUSW(P). This is a time of historic consequence for our nation, as well as our allies and partners, and I believe that the President's vision for our nation's defense is precisely what is required to restore and sustain peace through strength for decades to come. The President's is a vision in which I am personally deeply invested, and it is therefore a high and sincere honor to be considered for this opportunity to help advance his agenda.

I also believe that I am uniquely qualified to do so. The role of the DUSW(P) is to serve as the first assistant to the USW(P). In this capacity, the DUSW(P) is responsible for assisting the USW(P) in the performance of his duties—in essence, under the direction of the Secretary of War, ensuring that the United States has the right defense strategy; that that strategy is reflected in the joint force's plans, posture, structure, and activities; and that that strategy integrates effectively and logically with the Nation's overall strategy, and with the activities and strategies of our allies, in the face of the threats that we confront.

Performing these responsibilities effectively first and foremost requires the DUSW(P)

to have the trust and confidence of the USW(P). This is important as a matter of substance because it is a critical enabler of candid and effective advising. It is also important from a management standpoint, as it enables the USW(P) to rely on the DUSW(P) as much as possible and prudent to help guide, direct, oversee, and support the OUSW(P) organization, thereby ensuring that the organization as a whole is well-equipped and empowered to support the USW(P) and deliver on the Secretary's intent.

With respect to my qualifications in this regard, I have had the opportunity to earn the trust and confidence of the USW(P) over the course of more than a decade working together on matters of defense strategy and policy, including early work on nuclear deterrence and escalation management; the critical role of deterrence by denial in Eastern Europe and the Western Pacific; and the rising importance of space as a warfighting domain and implications for deterrence, escalation management, and force design for that domain. I was also the principal substantive advisor to the USW(P) for the drafting of his book, *The Strategy of Denial*, and have worked closely with him on related matters, including the implications of China's military buildup for U.S. defense strategy and opportunities to strengthen NATO and other U.S. alliances and partnerships, thereby maximizing the United States' and our allies' collective ability to deter and defeat simultaneous threats from multiple actors on a sustainable basis.

The DUSW(P) must also possess the substantive depth required to advise the USW(P)—and stand in for him, as required—on matters related to defense strategy and policy. With respect to my qualifications, I have had the opportunity to work on these matters in detail for more than decade. Early in my career, for instance, I worked closely with former USW(P) James Miller and the sitting USW(P) on the implications of emerging technologies for U.S.-Russian strategic stability, with particular attention to deterrence by denial and escalation management, both conventional and nuclear, along NATO's eastern front. I built on this work during my tenure in the U.S. defense industry, where I was involved in work related to U.S. nuclear modernization and deterrence, more broadly, including items related to conventional-nuclear integration. In this role, I also began work related to the Chinese military threat, with an eye toward their rapidly increasing operational capacity and capabilities, and consequent implications for the Joint Force, deterrence by denial in the Western Pacific, and our broader defense strategy.

I built on this work in the office of Senator Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), where I served for four years as the principal advisor for his work on the Armed Services Committee. In this capacity, I had the opportunity to lead work related to strengthening conventional and nuclear deterrence against China in the Indo-Pacific, including regular delegations to the Indo-Pacific to monitor the Chinese military threat and U.S. responses to it. I also engaged regularly with U.S. allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East, as well as members of the U.S. interagency, on matters related to strengthening deterrence across regions through a combination of focused, revitalized American military power and the fuller engagement of U.S. allies and partners. This

approach was later reflected in my work at The Heritage Foundation, where I led the organization's special report on U.S. defense strategy, which highlighted the critical importance of homeland defense, deterring China in the Indo-Pacific, and increasing burden-sharing across regions, with Israel, then defending itself in the aftermath of the barbaric October 7th attack, highlighted as an example of a model ally in this regard.

Most recently, I have demonstrated my substantive depth throughout my service in the Department of War (DoW) since January 20, 2025, first as the official performing the duties of the Under Secretary of War for Policy (PTDO USW(P)) and now as Senior Advisor to USW(P). In these roles, I have led, or directly supported USW(P)'s leadership, on a range of matters related to U.S. defense strategy and policy, including strategic guidance; force development; planning, posture, and force management; and alliance management. I have also demonstrated my ability to learn from and leverage teammates in areas where I do not have as much depth or experience. This is simply vital, in my view—the demonstrated ability to proactively identify knowledge gaps and fill them in a timely, thoughtful, and deliberate way in order to enable effective advising and decision-making—for any individual in the role of DUSW(P) given the breadth of issues for which OUSW(P) is responsible.

Finally—the ability to deliver results. As important as substantive depth is, the USW(P)'s ability to inform and help to advance the Secretary's agenda also depends in large measure on his and his team's ability to work effectively in the Pentagon and interagency. The DUSW(P)'s ability to support the USW(P) in the performance of his duties depends on the same. This is partly a matter of understanding relevant processes and being able to ensure that the OUSW(P) is participating in them, as appropriate, whether in a leadership role, as a coordinating principal, or in another capacity. It is also a factor of the relationships that Policy leaders build across the Department and interagency through regular coordination and collaboration. As I learned on Capitol Hill, these habits of engagement and cooperation are vital to enable leaders to work together as effectively as possible, through formal processes and otherwise.

I have demonstrated my ability to deliver results through my role in a variety of priority initiatives, including the development of strategic guidance, plan reviews, initiatives related to alliance management and security cooperation, and advising on major operations, among others. In each instance, I worked closely with counterparts from across the Department and interagency, or directly supported the USW(P) as he did so, to secure input and buy-in from key stakeholders, and ensure that any related deliverables were as strong and rigorous as possible, consistent with the Secretary's intent.

- 5. Specifically what leadership and management experience do you possess that you would apply to your service as DUSD(P), if confirmed?**

When I first arrived in government, I had the benefit of working for a principal who clearly and consistently reinforced the value of building a culture of empowerment. As this principal described it, the purpose of building such a culture was to set conditions so that teammates were incentivized to perform at the highest levels and then enabled to do so, through a combination of clear guidance, direction, oversight, support, and accountability. As the principal put it, this was not just key to building effective teams—in a Senate office, for instance—it was also essential for directing and maximizing impact across large organizations—like OUSW(P)—in support of key missions like those handed down by the President and Secretary of War.

I have found this to be true. While in the Senate, I had the privilege of applying the lessons described above as the leader of a five-person national security team responsible for all manner of preparations and activities related to Senator Hawley's role on the Armed Services Committee, as well as other matters related to foreign policy and defense. Over the course of this time, I was responsible for overseeing and empowering staff, including military officers up to the rank of lieutenant colonel, on the Senator's behalf, and thereby maximizing our team's ability to help advance his agenda in the defense and foreign policy realms. The results of these efforts spoke to the team's hard work and the effectiveness of this management style, as did many of those staff members' subsequent successes as they grew and took on new and greater responsibilities in the Senator's office and other organizations.

I have applied a similar model during my tenure at the Department. As PTDO USW(P), I was responsible for rapidly reorienting the OUSW(P)—composed of roughly 1,000 civilian, uniformed, and contractor personnel at the time—to Secretary Hegseth's intent at the beginning of the administration and then driving action accordingly. I did so through a combination of clear guidance and direction to the ASWs and their equivalents, either directly or through my deputy; regular and detailed oversight; and support to different teams as required, whether in terms of additional steer, resourcing, or other enablement. In each case, I saw it as my responsibility to ensure that our key leaders understood what was required of them and their teams, and that they had what they needed to succeed—and where they did, to empower them to keep delivering and take on more responsibility, as appropriate. At the same time, I was also responsible for providing accountability where it was required, so as to ensure that our work continued to be maximally aligned and effective on the Secretary's behalf.

I apply a similar approach in my role as Senior Advisor to the USW(P). In this capacity, in close coordination with the USW(P) and the official performing the duties of the DUSW(P), I am responsible for overseeing certain elements of the OUSW(P) and a variety of priority initiatives. In each case, I seek to empower ASWs and their teams, so that we can maximize our collective ability to deliver for the USW(P) in a timely and effective manner, in direct alignment with the Secretary's intent.

- 6. Are there any actions you would take to enhance your ability to perform the duties and exercise the powers of the DUSD(P)?**

At this time, I am not aware of any actions that I would take to enhance my ability to perform the duties and exercise the powers of the DUSW(P). If confirmed, I would leverage the qualifications and approaches described in this section to ensure that the USW(P) is fully supported and enabled to perform his duties as effectively as possible.

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.

- 7. 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?**

I do.

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

I do.

- 9. 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?**

I do.

Major Challenges and Priorities

- 10. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you would face if confirmed as the DUSD(P)?**

President Trump took office to a deteriorating security environment, marked by conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, a rapidly militarizing China in the Indo-Pacific, and severe conditions in our own hemisphere. Since then, the President has led the Department of War and other elements of the interagency in rolling back many of these negative trends.

But we cannot take that progress for granted. Instead, as the Secretary of War has

said, we must lean forward to build on that progress, with a clear focus on defending the U.S. homeland, deterring China in the Indo-Pacific, increasing burden-sharing with our allies and partners, and supercharging our nation's defense industrial base. In doing so, we can set conditions for lasting peace through strength, both here in the Western Hemisphere and in each of the key regions of the world where, faced by the combined might of the American military and our newly-energized allies and partners, our adversaries will be forced to conclude that armed aggression will fail and therefore be deterred from fighting us in the first place, whether individually or simultaneously in multiple theaters.

Delivering on this intent will take time and resources, however—from the United States and our allies and partners. And our nation's adversaries get a vote. These, then, are the most significant challenges that I would expect to confront if confirmed as the DUSW(P): accelerating efforts to align the Joint Force to the priorities laid out by the Secretary, above all defense of the U.S. homeland and deterring China; incentivizing and enabling allies and partners to do more for our collective defense with all due urgency; and maintaining our shared ability to deter or defeat aggression on multiple fronts over the course of this process, and especially as we work to strengthen our alliances and partnerships.

Fortunately, we have a very strong basis from which to overcome these challenges. As President Trump has said, the Joint Force remains the most powerful military in the world. At the same time, the Secretary has provided clear guidance and direction for how the Department will deliver on the President's vision for America First and Peace Through Strength. The conditions are therefore set for the DoW to prioritize and move with speed, in the process building and reinforcing incentives for allies and partners to step up in a major way. At the same time, as a result of President Trump's historic leadership, allies around the world are already stepping up in ways that they have not for decades, if not longer. From the NATO Hague Summit to recent announcements in the Indo-Pacific, allies are heeding the President's calls for them to do more for themselves and our collective defense—and they are responding in transformational ways.

11. If confirmed, specifically what actions would you take to address each of these challenges?

If confirmed, I would respond to the challenges laid out above as follows:

First, if confirmed, I would prioritize ensuring that the DoW's strategic guidance aligns to the intent laid out by the Secretary, including prioritization of homeland defense and deterring China, increasing burden-sharing with allies and partners, and supercharging our nation's defense industrial base. I would then work to ensure that subordinate guidance and related activities (e.g., planning, programming, global force management) also align with the Secretary's guidance and direction. As part of this effort, I would build and maintain close relationships with leaders

across the Department, including the Joint Staff, Services, and Combatant Commands. I would also seek to empower the relevant ASWs and their teams.

Second, if confirmed, I would prioritize efforts to incentivize allies to spend more on defense and then invest that defense spending as effectively as possible. This will involve close, detailed engagement on matters related to force and operational planning, among other military issues. Here, as well, effective engagement will be enabled by strong and sustained relationships with my counterparts in relevant countries. I would also seek to empower the relevant ASWs and their teams to drive on these initiatives, always in direct alignment with the Secretary's intent.

Finally, President Trump has shown that he is willing to take decisive action to defend our nation where he is required to do so, from Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER to ongoing operations in the Western Hemisphere—and our adversaries have taken note. If confirmed, I would prioritize ensuring that the OUSW(P) is providing all necessary support for ongoing operations, thereby maximizing our ability not only to help achieve the objectives assigned by the Secretary but also to deter others around the world, as they are forced to reckon with the President's decisiveness and the power of the Joint Force.

12. If confirmed, what innovative ideas, if any, would you consider providing the USD(P) and the Secretary of Defense regarding the organization and operations of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P))?

If confirmed, I would work with the USW(P) to identify areas where the OUSW(P) may be able to gain efficiencies or other benefits through new technical, organizational, process, or other improvements.

Department of Defense Reforms

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 included an increase in the number of personnel authorized to be assigned to the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

13. Do you believe that an increase in the number of personnel assigned to the OUSD(P) is necessary and appropriate? To what missions and functions would you apply such an increase, if confirmed?

If confirmed, I will provide my candid feedback to the USW(P) of any instance in which I assess that an increase in the number of personnel assigned to the OUSW(P) is necessary and appropriate, including to support civilian control of the military. At this time, I am not of the view that such an increase is required.

- 14. In your opinion, how does the number of personnel assigned to OUSD(P) (as compared to the number of personnel assigned to the Joint Staff) impact civilian control of the military?**

The OUSW(P) must be sized appropriately to properly inform and facilitate implementation of policy decisions by the Secretary. If the OUSW(P) is not sized appropriately, then its ability to perform these functions, consistent with the principle of civilian control of the military, will be limited.

- 15. In your view, would an increase in the number of personnel assigned to the OUSD(P) enhance civilian control of the military? Please explain your answer.**

The OUSW(P) must be sized appropriately to properly inform and facilitate implementation of policy decisions by the Secretary. If the OUSW(P) is not sized appropriately, then its ability to perform these functions, consistent with the principle of civilian control of the military, will be limited.

If confirmed, I will provide my candid feedback to the USW(P) of any instance in which I assess that an increase in the number of personnel assigned to the OUSW(P) is necessary and appropriate, including to support civilian control of the military. At this time, I am not of the view that such an increase is required.

- 16. What are your personal views on the principle of civilian control of the military?**

I believe strongly in the principle of civilian control of the military, which is foundational to our constitutional republic. This does not mean that it is appropriate for civilians to dictate to the military, however. To the contrary, as the USW(P) has written, particularly in the world of great power rivalry in which we find ourselves today, civilian control should take the form of a respectful, engaged, and expert discussion and debate. The purpose is to ensure that the conduct of defense and war is an instrument of national policy, and thus democratically accountable, while also ensuring that our military is the very best that it can be, and that our military leaders' professional ethos and expertise is respected and employed as appropriate in support of civilian-led policy.

National Defense Strategy and Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance

- 17. The Trump Administration's 2017 National Security Strategy and the Biden Administration's 2022 National Security Strategy both framed the international security environment in terms of great power competition. Will this continue to serve as the framing construct for the 2025 National Defense Strategy? If not, why?**

Yes, I expect that the 2025 NDS will frame the international security environment in terms of great power competition.

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.

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

The Trump Administration's 2018 NDS rightly shifted the Department's focus from counterinsurgency toward great power competition. Recognizing the most important, dangerous, and consequential threats to Americans' interests, the Secretary has directed the Department to prioritize defending the U.S. homeland and deterring China in the Indo-Pacific, while also increasing burden-sharing with allies and partners worldwide.

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

Consistent with President Trump's commonsense, America First, Peace Through Strength agenda, I believe that U.S. forces should be postured and employed in a manner that directly supports Americans' security, freedom, and prosperity. Combat-credible forward forces are especially important in the Indo-Pacific, particularly with respect to a denial defense along the First Island Chain. If confirmed, I commit to regularly evaluating U.S. force posture with the goal of ensuring that the Joint Force is positioned to achieve the objectives set forth by the President and the Secretary of War, including deterring China in the Indo-Pacific. In this process, and with respect to the Indo-Pacific, in particular, I would expect to leverage expertise resident not only in the OUSW(P) but also in the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness (OUSW(P&R)), Joint Staff, and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM).

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

It will take a variety of types of forces, concepts, and posture to effectively deter and, if necessary, defeat a Chinese assault along the First Island Chain. The U.S. strategy of

denial complements Taiwan's plans for layered defense by providing combat-capable forces on operationally relevant timelines, to provide a strong local defense that is difficult and painful to dislodge while bolstering allied confidence in our resolve. That said, Taiwan needs to do more and faster, first and foremost by significantly increasing its defense spending and rapidly acquiring the appropriate weapons and systems needed to deter aggression from China. The United States and Taiwan do not stand alone in deterring Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific. The most important thing the United States and its regional allies can do is ensure they have sufficient military forces to conduct a denial defense against a Chinese *fait accompli* along the First Island Chain. If we do this, then I am confident that Beijing's attempts to expand its influence and dominate its neighbors can be resisted. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with my counterparts in the Department and interagency to ensure that DoW and our partners in the region are doing everything possible to strengthen our individual and collective defenses, with the urgency required by the pace and scale of China's military build-up.

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

As Secretary Hegseth has said, maintaining deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region requires capable allies and partners to augment our forward postured military capabilities. Allies must strengthen their own defense capabilities to enhance credible deterrence against adversary aggression and proactively engage in regional security initiatives. This is vitally important not just as a signal of their political resolve to defend themselves and resist Chinese aggression more broadly. It is also essential from an operational perspective, given time-distance challenges and the importance of a robust forward defense for an effective denial defense. If confirmed, I will prioritize working closely with our allies and partners in the region to incentivize and enable them to strengthen their defenses at the pace required by the threat environment.

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

Russia's nuclear forces pose an existential threat to the United States. Russia also has the ability to threaten the U.S. homeland using other capabilities. The President has made clear that the Department is to prioritize defending the U.S. homeland. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that we do so, including against these threats from Russia.

Russia also poses a serious and enduring conventional military threat to NATO allies in Eastern Europe. This is one of the reasons why it is so important for America's NATO allies to rapidly increase burden-sharing. Fortunately, as a result of President Trump's historic leadership, they are doing so. The Hague Summit pledge to raise defense

spending to five percent of gross domestic product (GDP) is nothing short of transformational and will allow our allies to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense. As they increase and sustain investments in their military forces and enabling infrastructure, the balance of military power in the European theater will shift decisively in the direction of the Alliance. This, in turn, will set conditions for lasting peace through strength in Europe, even in the face of simultaneous challenges in other regions of the world. If confirmed, I committed to working closely with our NATO to incentivize and enable them to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense, in line with the Secretary's intent, and at the speed required by the threat environment.

23. Is the U.S. force posture in Europe sufficient to deter Russian conventional aggression in Europe?

As the Secretary of War made clear at the NATO Defense Ministerial Meeting this past June, it is only responsible for the United States to continually assess our force posture in Europe. As he stated, the United States cannot be everywhere all the time, nor should we be. It is therefore prudent for us to review U.S. force posture, in real time, alongside our allies and partners, to ensure that it is right-sized. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commander of U.S. European Command (CDRUSEUCOM) and his team, as well my counterparts on the Joint Staff and other key components, to ensure that U.S. force posture in the European theater reflects the Secretary's intent, in line with President Trump's America First, Peace Through Strength agenda.

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

The Secretary of War has made clear that our NATO allies must take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense. As he testified before this Committee: "Our NATO allies have the economic strength to deter Russia, and our own resources are increasingly strained. As we shift our focus to the Pacific, we are counting on our NATO allies to devote more resources to defense to forge a strong shield of deterrence in Europe." Fortunately, as a result of President Trump's historic leadership, they are already doing so.

The Hague Summit pledge to raise defense spending to five percent of GDP is nothing short of transformational, and it will allow our NATO allies to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense. As they increase and sustain investments in their military forces and enabling infrastructure, the balance of military power in the European theater will shift decisively in the direction of the Alliance. This, in turn, will set conditions for lasting peace through strength in Europe, even in the face of simultaneous challenges in other regions of the world.

Further analysis is required to determine which capabilities and force structure will best allow our NATO allies to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense and should therefore be the focus of their ongoing and increasing defense investments. If confirmed, I would work closely with my counterparts in the Joint Staff, U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), and other relevant components as part of this analysis. I would also look forward to engaging allies on the results of this analysis and related recommendations. As an interim step, allies should use the capability targets that Defense Ministers agreed to in June 2025 as the framework and road map to guide the increased spending, coupled with robust exercises to hone and validate NATO's capabilities.

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

The strategic partnership between China and Russia has grown stronger in recent years, with both countries supporting and enabling one another in ways that are mutually advantageous. This dynamic has already presented challenges to the United States and its allies, and we must be sensitive to further challenges still, including the potential for simultaneous aggression. In my view, this risk, in particular, drives the urgent need for the Department to work closely with our NATO allies to incentivize and enable them to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense with all due speed.

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

The United States and its allies have successfully deterred North Korean aggression since the end of the Korean War. Maintaining deterrence will depend on continuing to ensure a high level of operational readiness. I believe we need to be clear-eyed, frank, and realistic with our allies about the nature of the threats we face and the allocation of responsibilities among ourselves, in the service of ensuring our alliances are as strong as possible and thereby able to deter North Korea on an enduring basis, even in the face of simultaneous threats elsewhere in the Indo-Pacific and other regions.

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

The United States and its allies have successfully deterred North Korean aggression since 1953. Yet North Korea still poses a military threat to the Republic of Korea (ROK), Japan, and the United States itself. It is therefore important for the United States and its allies to maintain a robust deterrent against North Korea. Critically, however, we must do so in a manner that is both effective and sustainable, given the different threats facing the United States as well as the resources available to the Department to confront all those threats at the same time.

To that end, consistent with the Secretary's direction to increase burden-sharing with

America's allies and partners, it is vitally important that the Department work closely with our allies in Seoul and Tokyo to incentivize and enable them to do more for their own and our collective defense. In the process, we can strengthen each of these alliances and maximize our collective ability to deter North Korea on an enduring basis. Fortunately, as a result of President Trump's historic leadership, we are already seeing progress in this regard.

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

Japan is a critical ally of the United States. Japan can help to deter North Korean conventional aggression by increasing its own defense spending and capabilities. This will allow Japan, alongside the United States, to help to raise the risks and costs to North Korea of engaging in conventional aggression, thereby complicating Pyongyang's decision calculus and strengthening deterrence. If confirmed, I am committed to strengthening our defense relationship with Japan, in close coordination with counterparts across the DoW and interagency.

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

If confirmed, I would be responsible for helping to develop and oversee implementation of the 2025 NDS. As the Assistant to the Secretary of War for Public Affairs stated in May, consistent with President Trump's America First, Peace Through Strength agenda, the Strategy will prioritize defense of the U.S. homeland, deterring China in the Indo-Pacific, and increasing burden-sharing with allies and partners. In these ways, the Strategy will help to set conditions for lasting peace through strength around the world.

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

If confirmed, I would take a deliberate and measured approach to evaluating progress toward each of the priorities laid out in the Strategy. Until publication of a new NDS, I believe it would be inappropriate to discuss specific indicators of progress vis-a-vis its implementation.

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

The NDS development process has been a comprehensive approach, including detailed analysis and close collaboration across the DoW. I believe it would be inappropriate to discuss specific processes related to implementation of the NDS prior to its release.

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

The effective use of assessments and analysis are critical to successful policy formulation and decision-making. If confirmed, I will work to enhance the Department's processes for strategic assessment and analysis in order to support timely and effective implementation of the Secretary's priorities.

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

I believe that the National Defense Strategy is a powerful tool for aligning and driving action through the Department of War in direct alignment with and support of the President Trump's commonsense, America First, Peace Through Strength agenda. I therefore believe that the NDS should be something that the Department can realistically implement in the existing and anticipated resourcing environment. As a result, I believe that the NDS should be budget-informed rather than budget-driven. I further assess that the best indicator of whether the NDS is budget-informed will be the Department's progress in implementing it. Crucially, however, this does not rule out identifying areas where additional funding would be useful or advocating for the same.

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

The DPG and GEF, alongside the Contingency Planning Guidance (CPG), are the Secretary's primary tools for translating the NDS into concrete priorities and direction for future force development (i.e., via the DPG) and near-term employment (i.e., via the GEF) of the Joint Force. The role of the DPG is to translate the NDS into programmatic guidance for the Military Departments, Defense Agencies, and Combatant Commands. The role of the GEF is to translate the NDS into specific military planning guidance for the employment of military forces through operational activities day-to-day, major exercises, and security cooperation under the rubric of the defense strategy.

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

The DPG is an annual, internal, and pre-decisional DoW planning document. If confirmed, as directed by the USW(P), I will work closely with the ASW for Strategy,

Plans, and Forces (ASW(SPF)) to ensure that the DPG is completed and ready for the Secretary's review as early as possible in each calendar year. With the Secretary's approval, this will allow leadership of the Military Services and DoW Components to integrate the DPG's direction before their Program Objective Memoranda have been finalized. If confirmed, I would also see to it that the GEF prioritizes attention and resources on the most serious and urgent national security threats in support of NDS implementation. Finally, if confirmed, I will seek opportunities to improve transparency of the DPG and GEF, including for Congress.

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

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

The 2022 NDS identified defending the homeland as the top defense priority.

37. **In your view, is the Department making investments in homeland defense that are consistent with this being a top priority? What additional investments do you believe are necessary to protect the homeland?**

President Trump has directed the Department of War to prioritize defending the U.S. homeland, and we are doing so. Border security is national security, and the Department is fully engaged, alongside our interagency counterparts, in efforts to achieve and maintain full operational control of our nation's borders. The Department is also actively engaged throughout the Western Hemisphere to help stop the flow of lethal narcotics into the United States. At the same time, the Department is strengthening our nation's defenses against missile and other aerial threats, including through the President's Golden Dome for America, as well as by strengthening burden-sharing with Canada. We are also prioritizing investments in our nation's nuclear deterrent, which forms the bedrock of our nation's defense, including our ability to deter large-scale foreign attacks on the American homeland. And we continue to hunt terrorists with the capability and intent to strike the American homeland. In my view, each of these is a key line of effort and should be resourced accordingly.

38. **In your view, to what extent should the Department anticipate being called on to**

support civil authorities in the event of a war with a strategic competitor? What investments and planning do you believe the Department should be undertaking to prepare for such a scenario?

Defense support to civil authorities is a vital part of such preparations, and if deterrence fails, defending against and recovering from attacks on the U.S. homeland. DoW's mission is to defend the homeland and to project power to fight and win the Nation's wars. War with a peer or near-peer competitor would have serious and direct impact on the homeland, including kinetic and non-kinetic attacks on military bases, dual-use infrastructure, and civilian targets in the U.S. homeland. Building resilience at all levels—federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial—is a vital whole-of-government approach to strengthen domestic entities, which will enable the defense of the Homeland and the effective prosecution of the war. For these reasons, it is my view that the Department should be actively preparing for such contingencies and working to prepare for such engagement with and support to civil authorities.

The 2023 Strategic Posture Commission (SPC) reached similar conclusions to the NDS Commission regarding the threats facing the United States, now and in the coming decades. To address these threats, the SPC recommended that U.S. defense strategy should prepare to effectively deter, and if necessary, defeat, simultaneous Russian and Chinese conventional aggression in two geographically separate theaters.

39. Do you agree with the conclusions and recommendations of the SPC regarding overall force sizing?

It is clear that the United States faces the very real potential of multi-front aggression. The central focus of U.S. defense strategy and planning must be to prepare for such conflicts, *precisely* to deter them.

Such preparations must be clear-eyed and realistic, however, taking stock of the existing size and structure of our armed forces, the limitations of our existing defense industrial base, the capabilities of our allies and adversaries, and the likely timelines for addressing our shortfalls. A realistic strategy of prioritization focused on China while working closely with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East, such as Secretary Hegseth has laid out, would allow us to meet these challenges.

The 2023 SPC concluded 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.

40. Do you agree with the recommendations of the SPC regarding U.S. nuclear forces?

It is crucial for the United States never to be subject to nuclear blackmail or coercion, let alone attack. We therefore absolutely need a nuclear force able to deter more than one nuclear power and provide the President with credible response options if deterrence fails. What precisely that entails in light of the state of our industrial base, the needs of our conventional forces, allied capabilities, and other salient factors, would be a primary focus for me, if confirmed.

In mandating changes to the process and form of the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the National Military Strategy, Congress intended that these documents, through the Defense Planning Guidance, would more rigorously drive program planning of the Military Departments, Defense Agencies, and Combatant Commands.

41. If confirmed, how would you ensure consistency between the guiding strategies of the Department and its allocation of resources?

If confirmed, I would see it as a central focus of my tenure to ensure that our strategic documents are keyed to the national interest in service of our broader international strategy, realistic, and rigorous, and that they are thoroughly, logically, and practically carried through in subordinate documents and—critically—actually implemented.

Cyber Policy and Authorities

National Security Presidential Memorandum-13 (NSPM-13) and its follow-on, NSPM-21, *United States Cyber Operations Policy*, provides the process for approving cyberspace operations. Together with congressional clarification that clandestine military activities or operations in cyberspace can be considered “traditional military operations” under the National Security Act of 1947, NSPM-13/21 is credited with enabling the Federal government to undertake significant cyberspace actions on a timely basis within an effective oversight framework.

42. What role do you believe cyber operations plays in national security and defense?

Cyberspace is a warfighting domain and should be prioritized accordingly. This is vital not only to protect our nation’s homeland, including military targets and dual-use infrastructure that is vital to our military’s ability to project power abroad. It can also be a critical enabler of the Joint Force’s ability to project power, especially for purposes of deterring Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commander of U.S. Cyber Command (CDRUSCYBERCOM) and other key leaders to strengthen the Department’s capabilities in this domain.

- 43. In your view, has NSPM-13/21 significantly improved the planning and approval of military operations in cyberspace? In your view, can NSPM-13/21 be improved, and if so, how?**

I would be happy to answer this question in a classified forum.

- 44. If confirmed, how will you support the Department in its employment of cyberspace operations under NSPM-13/21?**

I would be happy to answer this question in a classified forum.

The United States has been subjected to sophisticated attacks conducted by Chinese-linked advanced persistent threats (APT), with some of the most notable APT groups being Volt and Salt Typhoon. These actors not only gained access to American critical infrastructure, but they reinforced a new reality in which our adversaries can deploy cyber capabilities that hold U.S. targets at a time and place of their choosing. As a result of these attacks, there is a real concern over how effective our current cyber deterrence policy is.

- 45. In your view, is the current approach to deterring adversary activities in cyberspace failing to meet the need of today's threat environment?**

Secretary Hegseth has directed the Department to reestablish deterrence across all domains, including cyberspace. If confirmed, I will work closely with CDRUSCYBERCOM and other key leaders to ensure that we are investing appropriately in our cyber capabilities, both offensive and defensive, so that we can provide the Secretary of War and the President with credible options for deterring or responding to cyberattacks on the U.S. homeland.

- 46. How should the U.S. government hold other governments accountable for cyber attacks against American targets, to include critical infrastructure?**

If confirmed, I will work closely with CDRUSCYBERCOM and other key leaders to ensure that we are investing appropriately in our cyber capabilities, both offensive and defensive, so that we can provide the Secretary and the President with credible options for deterring or responding to cyberattacks on the U.S. homeland.

- 47. In your view, what factors should be considered in assessing whether a cyber action by an adversary would constitute an act of war?**

Among other factors, I would consider the severity (e.g., resulting damage) and targets (e.g., military, dual-use, or civilian) when evaluating whether a cyber action by an adversary should constitute an act of war. If confirmed, I will work closely with

CDRUSCYBERCOM and other key leaders to ensure that we are investing appropriately in our cyber capabilities, both offensive and defensive, so that we can provide the Secretary of War and the President with credible options for deterring or responding to cyberattacks on the U.S. homeland.

- 48. While diplomacy and improved defenses are critical to deterring threats, do you envision a role for DOD Cyber Mission Forces in conducting disruptive actions directly against these organizations in cyberspace? Please explain your answer.**

The Department must have the offensive capabilities and resources necessary to deter adversaries from targeting the United States and, if necessary, to respond decisively. If confirmed, I will work closely with CDRUSCYBERCOM and other key leaders to ensure that we are investing appropriately in our cyber capabilities, both offensive and defensive, so that we can provide the Secretary and the President with credible options for deterring or responding to cyberattacks on the U.S. homeland.

- 49. If confirmed, how will you ensure the cyber forces across the Department of Defense are adequately equipped to counter and deter adversary activities in cyberspace?**

Cyberspace is a warfighting domain and should be prioritized accordingly. This is vital not only to protect our nation's homeland, including military targets and dual-use infrastructure that is vital to our military's ability to project power abroad. It can also be a critical enabler of the Joint Force's ability to project power, especially for purposes of deterring Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will partner closely with CDRUSCYBERCOM and other key leaders to strengthen the Department's capabilities in this domain. In doing so, we can ensure that the cyber forces across the DoW are adequately equipped to counter and deter adversary activities in cyberspace, in line with the Secretary's intent.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, required the appointment of a Principal Cyber Advisor (PCA) to the Secretary of Defense to coordinate across all the DOD components with cyberspace responsibilities, assist in the development of cyber strategies and posture reviews, and oversee implementation of strategies and policies. In 2024, the Department of Defense established the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy to provide civilian oversight of cyber operations and the cyber operations force, mirroring the construct of Special Operations Command and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict.

- 50. If confirmed, how will you work to support the growth and build out of this office?**

If confirmed, I will ensure that the ASW for Cyber Policy (ASW(CP)) has the resources

required to drive implementation of cyber-related guidance in the Secretary's National Defense Strategy.

51. What do you believe will be the most important in developing the functions and authorities of this office and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy?

If confirmed, I will ensure that the ASW(CP) has the resources required to drive implementation of cyber-related guidance in the Secretary's National Defense Strategy.

In September 2023, DOD released its 2023 Cyber Strategy. The strategy charges DOD to persistently engage malicious cyber actors and other malign threats to U.S. interests in cyberspace.

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

The DoW and Cyber Mission Force (CMF) are primarily charged with defending forward—in other words, defending against cyber threats with strategic or military implications. This includes threats to the defense industrial base, nuclear command and control, and the ability to project U.S. power globally. By contrast, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and law enforcement agencies are lead for homeland security, with DoW in support.

Under the leadership of President Trump and Secretary Hegseth, the DoW has prioritized restoring deterrence in all domains, including cyberspace. If confirmed, I will work closely with CDRUSCYBERCOM and other key leaders to strengthen DoW capabilities in this domain.

53. Based on your experience, what do you see as areas where the structure and training of the Cyber Mission Force should evolve to meet emerging cyber threats?

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Assistant Secretary of War for Cyber Policy, who also serves as the Department's Principal Cyber Advisor, works closely with other key stakeholders to ensure that the Department is proactively identifying and addressing areas where we must adjust cyber force generation and force employment to deter, deny, and defeat adversary aggression.

54. Are there elements missing from our current approach for offensive and defensive cyber operations that you would recommend we pursue?

One of my highest priorities is to ensure the alignment of our cyber resources and capabilities in accordance with priorities and objectives of the President and the Secretary. If confirmed, I will review DoW's current approach to offensive and defensive cyber operations and make necessary recommendations to ensure that the Department's cyber forces have what they need to deliver on the Secretary's priorities, especially defending the U.S. homeland and deterring China.

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

Information sharing between private and public sectors is essential to responding to attacks on commercial entities. It is my understanding that the Department of War has numerous successful programs, including the Cyber Security Collaboration Center and UNDERADVISEMENT, with which to engage the private sector regarding threat information sharing.

56. Do you consider the recent breaches in telecommunications infrastructure involving Salt Typhoon to be an "act of war" or an espionage operation that falls within *de facto* norms? In your view, does the nature and scope of this intrusion operation merit a stronger or more visible response?

Adversaries are seeking to exploit cyber vulnerabilities in our infrastructure for a range of purposes, including to conduct espionage and to gain military advantage. Our response, in line with the President's direction to prioritize defending the U.S. homeland, is to work with other U.S. government departments and agencies to enhance the security of our own networks and critical infrastructure, while also ensuring the DoW has second-to-none offensive and defensive cyber forces capable of countering these activities.

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

These intrusions highlight the criticality of maintaining vigilance in defending our networks and critical infrastructure, as well as the importance of close partnerships with other U.S. government departments and agencies and the private sector. In line with President Trump and Secretary Hegseth's to restore deterrence in all domains, this activity underscores the need to prioritize defending our homeland and deterring adversary incursions into our critical infrastructure.

58. Do you believe that the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command should be dual-hatted? What are the benefits or disadvantages of this arrangement, in your view? Please explain your answer.

The National Security Agency (NSA) and USCYBERCOM have distinct but complementary missions in cyberspace that are essential to achieving the strategic priorities of the President and Secretary. If confirmed, I will support continued consultations with the Secretary of War and Congress to ensure both organizations are optimized to meet the President's and Secretary's objectives.

- 59. If confirmed, what specific measures would you take to improve cybersecurity culture across the DOD workforce? How would you empower and hold key leaders accountable for improvements in DOD cybersecurity?**

If confirmed, I will ensure that the ASW(CP), who also serves as the Department's Principal Cyber Advisor, works closely with the Department's Chief Information Officer (CIO) to strengthen our posture and performance in this important area.

- 60. If confirmed, what how do you plan to work with the Military Service Principal Cyber Advisors and CIOs in the coordination of cyber policy and the many cyber initiatives across the DOD?**

If confirmed, I will ensure that the ASW(CP), who also serves as the Department's Principal Cyber Advisor, works closely with the Department's CIO to coordinate with the Military Service Principal Cyber Advisors and CIOs to ensure Service buy-in and participation in critical initiatives to forge cyber forces capable of delivering greater lethality and warfighting outcomes for the Department, in alignment with the National Defense Strategy.

The NDAA for FY 2021 established the position of National Cyber Director (NCD) to improve coordination and integration across the government in developing cyberspace strategy, policy, plans, and resource allocation.

- 61. What is your understanding of how DOD has been supporting the National Cyber Director?**

My understanding is that the DoW works closely with the National Cyber Director, which plays a critical role in coordinating our whole-of-government response to cyber threats, and will look to actively support and implement a future National Cyber Strategy.

- 62. Do you have suggestions for how you might improve the relationship with the NCD if confirmed?**

If confirmed, I would focus on ensuring that the Department of War works closely with the NCD to align our efforts with President Trump and Secretary Hegseth's vision for peace through strength. This includes areas of potential partnership for improving the

nation's cybersecurity, including securing critical infrastructure, engaging external partners, and developing the cyber workforce.

Cyber notifications from the Department for sensitive cyber military operations, as required by law, have become increasingly vague and do not provide enough information for the committee to perform adequate oversight of these operations.

63. If confirmed, what would you do to improve these cyber operations notifications?

I am committed to maintaining transparent communication with Congress about cyberspace operations. I understand the Department provides regular updates to Congress on cyber operations both through written notifications and regular briefings. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department provides sufficient and timely information on cyber operations to enable Congressional oversight.

64. Are there steps other than improving the written notifications that you would take, if confirmed, to help Congress perform oversight of these critical operations?

If confirmed, I will evaluate the Department's current processes for enabling Congressional oversight of cyberspace operations. I am committed to ensuring that the Department provides sufficient and timely information to enable Congressional oversight of these critical operations.

65. What is your understanding of the process for how the Department might respond to a request for Defense Support to Civilian Authorities (DSCA) when it comes to cyber incident?

The Department of War plays a crucial role in supporting our territorial integrity and the emergency response capacity of our civil authorities with our unique military capabilities. This support is primarily activated at the direction of the President or upon approval by the Secretary of War, typically in response to requests for assistance from lead federal agencies overwhelmed by crises, natural disasters, or special events. If confirmed, I will ensure the prompt review of DSCA requests.

Spectrum

66. In what ways does DOD rely on spectrum to support warfighter requirements? What future spectrum warfighter requirements are essential to executing the priorities of the INDSG?

The spectrum is essential to the Department's capacity to support military operations, testing, and training for homeland defense and national security. Maintaining freedom of

maneuver in the spectrum is how the Joint Force communicates, employs weapons, and closes kill webs. If confirmed, I would advocate for ensuring that the Joint Force has the resources and capabilities required to use spectrum as effectively as possible in support of the objectives laid out in the NDS.

Under the July 15, 2021, *Electromagnetic Spectrum Superiority Strategy Implementation Plan and Roadmap*, and per section 1053 of the FY 2019 NDAA, the DOD CIO has now assumed responsibilities as the DOD senior official for overall implementation of the Spectrum Superiority Strategy. Yet, there remain elements within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to advocate on matters related to Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (EMSO).

67. What do you believe is the roll of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in support EMSO and advocating for the Departments use of spectrum?

The OUSW(P) supports the USW(P) in the development and, with the Secretary's approval, promulgation of strategic guidance to align the Department's planning, posture-related, programming, and budgetary activities with the Secretary's intent. As part of these efforts, the OUSW(P) is responsible for incorporating EMSO considerations into relevant strategic guidance, including the NDS; overseeing integration of EMSO into relevant plans; strengthening EMSO-related cooperation and interoperability with U.S. allies and partners in a manner consistent with the Secretary's priorities; and ensuring alignment of the development of EW capabilities with national security and defense policy objectives. If confirmed, I will continue to support these efforts.

68. If confirmed, how will you work across the Department of Defense and associated federal entities to support defense equities?

If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with my counterparts in the DoW and other federal entities to ensure that they are properly informed of defense policy objectives and the impact of EMSO decisions on warfighting priorities.

Space systems, like other military systems, rely on the availability of sufficient frequency spectrum that is becoming increasingly scarce.

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

Spectrum is essential to mission success in all warfighting domains and a cornerstone of our national security. If confirmed, I will advocate for the requirements of the Joint Force. If confirmed, I would collaborate with Department senior leadership and

interagency stakeholders to ensure DoW's continued ability to carry out its critical national security missions to include those reliant on space systems.

Space

- 70. What are your views with respect to the necessity of civilian oversight of DOD space operations with respect to U.S. Space Command and Space Force? Is current civilian oversight of these organizations adequate? Should the OUSD(P) play a different or greater role in oversight of these organizations? Please explain your answer.**

Space is a critical warfighting domain. It is therefore crucially important to ensure proper civilian oversight of DoW space-related activities, including with respect to U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) and the U.S. Space Force (USSF). The purpose in doing so is in part to ensure that those activities align with the Secretary's priorities, in line with President Trump's commonsense, America First, Peace Through Strength agenda. But oversight is also key for ensuring that these organizations and the operations that they support have the resources required to deliver on those priorities, particularly given the pace and scale of the Chinese military buildup as well as other homeland defense-related developments in the space domain. At this time, it is my understanding that civilian oversight of these organizations is adequate. If confirmed, I would ensure that remains the case, including by providing recommendations to that effect.

There is growing concern about the vulnerability of our nation's space-based systems and supporting architectures.

- 71. If confirmed, what policies would you recommend to address these vulnerabilities?**

If confirmed, I will work closely with components within the OUSW(P), including the ASW for Space Policy (ASW(SP)) and the ASW(CP), as well as the USSF, USSPACECOM, and the Intelligence Community, to ensure that the Department of War has the critical capabilities that it needs to protect and advance U.S. advantages in space.

- 72. If confirmed, what changes to national security space policy, organization, and programs would you propose?**

If confirmed, I would prioritize ensuring that the DoW has the policy, organizations, and programs required to protect and build on the Joint Force's advantages in the space domain. Our ability to fight effectively in this domain is critical not just to deter and manage escalation in the space domain itself. It is also critical for the Joint Force's ability to project power against terrestrial targets, including for purposes of defending the U.S. homeland and deterring China in the Indo-Pacific. Getting this right is vital for our

nation's defense. If confirmed, I am committed to do my part in that regard.

73. In your view, what are the roles of our allies and industry with respect to DOD space and national security operations?

The U.S. commercial space sector is a key advantage for the United States. Our allies and partners can also contribute significantly to our combined ability to project power effectively in and through space, especially as they increase their defense spending. If confirmed, I would support efforts to work closely with both allies and industry to advance DoW objectives in space.

74. What principal duties do you believe should be assigned to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy with respect to space? Please explain your answer.

Statutorily, the ASW(SP) provides overall supervision of the Department's policy for space warfighting, under 10, U.S.C. § 138(5). The position's responsibilities also include analysis, planning, formulation, coordination, and oversight of the implementation of U.S. and DoW policy and guidance for the conduct of space and missile defense activities.

75. What other duties and responsibilities should be assigned to this ASD?

If confirmed, I will work with the USW(P) and the ASW(SP) to evaluate the assigned duties and responsibilities and determine whether any adjustments are warranted.

Middle East

76. What do you view as the Department's top priorities in the Middle East?

Consistent with President Trump's commonsense, America First, Peace Through Strength agenda, Secretary Hegseth has directed the Department to prioritize defending the U.S. homeland and increasing burden-sharing with allies and partners. Consistent with this direction, it is my view that the Department's top priorities in the Middle East included denying Iran's ability to acquire a nuclear weapon, neutralizing terrorists who pose a credible threat to the American homeland, protecting freedom of navigation for U.S. vessels, supporting the defense of our model ally Israel, and serving as a security enabler and integrator for other regional partners, thereby incentivizing and enabling them to take on greater responsibility for their own and our collective defense.

77. What is your understanding of the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) and its implications for the U.S. Central Command

(CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR)?

The President has been clear: The United States seeks “commerce, not chaos” in the Middle East, and the Department is deeply engaged, alongside other elements of the U.S. government, to deliver on the President’s intent. From a military standpoint, this means ensuring that the Joint Force is always able to defend U.S. interests in the region, including by taking decisive action, as the world saw with Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER. If confirmed, I am committed to achieving this objective.

- 78. To what extent does achieving U.S. national security interests in the Middle East require a continuous U.S. military presence there, in your view? In your opinion, is the current U.S. force presence in the Middle East appropriately sized? Please explain your answer.**

It is my view that the United States has significant interests at stake in the Middle East, including denying Iran’s ability to acquire a nuclear weapon, neutralizing terrorists who pose a credible threat to the American homeland, protecting freedom of navigation for U.S. vessels, supporting the defense of our model ally Israel, and serving as a security enabler and integrator for other regional partners, thereby incentivizing and enabling them to take on greater responsibility for their own and our collective defense. It is also my view that the United States will require a continuous military presence in the Middle East to achieve these objectives. If confirmed, I would do my part to ensure that any review of U.S. force posture in the Middle East results in recommendations that would allow the Joint Force to achieve these objectives, in coordination with other elements of the U.S. interagency.

- 79. What opportunities exist for increasing burden-sharing with regional partners to counter threats emanating from and affecting the CENTCOM AOR?**

In my view, Israel is a model ally in terms of its ability and willingness to take primary responsibility for its own defense, and the Department has an opportunity to reinforce and enable this kind of leadership and initiative on the part of an ally through the U.S.-Israeli defense relationship. The Department also has opportunities to strengthen burden-sharing with others in the region, including many of our Gulf partners, who are able to take on greater responsibility for their own and our collective defense, enabled by U.S.-origin capabilities, training, and information-sharing, particularly with respect to integrated air and missile defenses.

- 80. To what extent is the Middle East relevant to great power competition? How should DOD consider countering Russia and China in the Middle East, in your view?**

Given its size, energy resources, location, and other factors, the Middle East is relevant

to great power competition with China and Russia. It is my view that the United States can counter Chinese and Russian activities in the region through strong relationships with partners who are enabled and empowered across a full spectrum of activities, including foreign military sales, training, exercises, and regional integration efforts.

Pakistan

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

The United States and Pakistan have a multifaceted relationship. I understand counterterrorism cooperation has remained the central focus of our defense cooperation. If confirmed, I will continue to implement the Department's defense relationship with Pakistan, consistent with the President's objectives.

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

Pakistan continues to face terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan that pose a risk to broader regional stability. Consistent with President Trump's direction for the DoW to prioritize defending the U.S. homeland, I believe the United States and Pakistan have a shared interest in combatting terrorism, and that our cooperation with Pakistan should focus on counterterrorism objectives to protect the U.S. homeland.

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

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

Central Asia

84. What is your understanding of the role Russia and China play in the Central Asian states? Do you assess that their strategic aims have changed following the end of the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan?

It is my understanding that Russia continues to wield significant political influence across Central Asia. Over the last decade, however, I understand that China has emerged as the most powerful economic player in the region.

Following the end of the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan, Russia has sought to reassert itself as the primary political and security partner in Central Asia. Both Russia and China have attempted to portray the United States as an unreliable security partner but have struggled to replace U.S. support to border security, counterterrorism, and other priority security areas.

- 85. In your view, do you consider Central Asia as a place where the United States is in long-term strategic competition with Russia and China? If so, what can CENTCOM do to tip the regional balance in favor of the United States?**

It is my understanding that the United States benefits from security and economic partnerships with the Central Asian states, especially as they relate to critical minerals. With respect to U.S. Central Command's (USCENTCOM) role in the region, USCENTCOM can help to advance the Department's objectives in the region by continuing to conduct scoped security cooperation activities focused on border security and counterterrorism.

- 86. In your opinion, what are the potential consequences for U.S. access and interests in the region if the U.S. does not actively engage with Central Asian partners?**

In my view, if the United States does not actively engage with Central Asian partners, then those partners may struggle to adequately secure their borders from terrorist threats, including ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K). Disengagement from the region also risks U.S. commercial interests in the rare earth minerals sector as well as access to proven oil and gas reserves.

Iraq and Syria

- 87. What is your assessment of the current security situation in Syria?**

The United States, through the Defeat-ISIS Coalition and our partners in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), has defeated ISIS territorially and continues to pursue remnants of ISIS. We have sharply decreased the threat to the U.S. homeland, and although ISIS remains capable of low-level guerilla attacks, it cannot take territory or overwhelm local security actors. In addition, since the fall of the Assad regime, Iran's network in Syria has collapsed, reducing threats to our forces and to Israel.

Within areas controlled by the SDF, local security conditions are good, to include strong control of ISIS detention facilities and security around internally displaced persons camps that house some civilians affiliated with ISIS. The new Syrian government is still standing up its security services and has not fully established control over all armed groups in post-Assad Syria. We remain concerned about internal violence in Syria, which often has ethno-sectarian dimensions.

88. In your view, what are the U.S. national security objectives in Syria? To what extent does continued U.S. force presence in Syria support those objectives?

It is my understanding that the Department's primary objective in Syria is to prevent terrorists from using Syrian territory as a safe haven from which to strike the U.S. homeland. We can achieve that objective through a combination of direct action and by empowering local actors to degrade and destroy terrorists operating inside of Syrian territory. If confirmed, I will advocate for posturing U.S. forces so that they can effectively conduct these missions, especially targeting and neutralizing terrorists who pose a credible threat to the U.S. homeland. If confirmed, consistent with President Trump's decision to offer Syria a chance at peace and prosperity, I would also support the wider U.S. effort to lift sanctions and normalize relations with Syria, noting that a stronger, more prosperous, and sovereign Syria will be more capable of securing its own territory and resisting Iranian influence and less likely to export instability in the region.

89. In your view, should U.S. troop levels in Syria be tied to the achievement of certain conditions on the ground? If so, what conditions do you believe should factor into decisions about U.S. troop levels in Syria, Iraq, and the broader region?

Recognizing the success the United States has had against ISIS, including its 2019 territorial defeat under President Trump, the Department has proceeded with the consolidation of U.S. forces in Syria. This is a deliberate and conditions-based process. As it proceeds, consistent with President Trump's commonsense, America First, Peace Through Strength agenda, USCENTCOM will remain poised to continue strikes against the remnants of ISIS in Syria. The DoW will also work closely with capable and willing Coalition partners to maintain pressure on ISIS and respond to any other terrorist threats that arise. If confirmed, I will support this approach.

90. What is your assessment of the current security situation in Iraq?

I assess that the security situation in Iraq is stable, with the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) able to address most threats with minimal advisory support from the United States and other nations. ISIS has been greatly reduced, and while capable of low-level guerilla attacks, it cannot take territory or mount serious external operations planning. ISF, to include the Kurdish Security Forces such as the Peshmerga, are increasingly professional and capable. Our relationship is shifting away from two decades of contingency operations towards a more normalized bilateral security cooperation model.

At the same time, however, Iranian-Aligned Militia Groups (IAMGs) remain active outside of the ISF and have influence over the Iraqi government-funded Popular Mobilization Forces. These IAMGs have previously attacked U.S. forces and require strong U.S. pressure, using multiple tools of national power, on the Government of Iraq

to reduce their capability and influence.

91. What is your understanding of the current U.S. strategy and objectives in Iraq?

After more than two decades of conflict, the United States is pursuing normalized relations with the Government of Iraq with a focus on “commerce, not chaos.” The Department of War is partnering with the Department of State to negotiate a path forward with the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Foreign Affairs that charts next steps to regularize our security cooperation relationship so that it functions in a manner similar to other partners in the region.

Iran

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

Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER resulted in the obliteration of the Iranian nuclear program, and President Trump has warned Iran against renewing pursuit of a nuclear weapon. Iran’s conventional forces were also severely degraded over the course of the 12-Day War. Yet Iran’s military retains the ability to launch conventional strikes on targets in Israel and the Gulf. As a result, the United States, alongside Israel and others in the region, must remain vigilant to deter further Iranian aggression. If confirmed, I will support efforts to that effect.

93. Are U.S. military forces and capabilities currently deployed to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility adequate to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats posed by Iran?

Yes. The Department regularly evaluates U.S. force posture in the Middle East to ensure that the United States can deter and take decisive action against Iran, as directed by the President. Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER leaves no doubt that the Joint Force can take decisive action against Iran, without warning and at a time and place of the President’s choosing, using capabilities both inside and outside of the region. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that this remains the case.

94. In your view, what impact would a nuclear armed Iran have on regional security?

A nuclear-armed Iran would represent an unacceptable threat to American interests in the region. President Trump has also made clear that he will not allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon. If there was ever any doubt of the President’s resolve on the part of Iran’s leader, Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER should have put it to rest. If confirmed, I will support the President’s efforts to deny Iran a nuclear weapon.

- 95. What is your understanding of National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM-2), dated February 4, 2025, regarding Iran, and U.S. Central Command's roles and responsibilities in support of NSPM-2?**

NSPM-2 calls for U.S. Departments and agencies to exert maximum pressure to deny Iran a path to a nuclear weapon and counter its malign influence. Among the Department of War's most prominent contributions to NSPM-2, USCENTCOM executed Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER against Iran's nuclear program, Operation ROUGH RIDER against the Houthis, and unprecedented air defense operations to protect Israel against Iran and its proxies.

- 96. What actions, if any, do you believe the United States and the international community could undertake to counter Iran's increasing conventional military capabilities?**

Iran's conventional military capabilities represent an enduring challenge. Following the completion of snapback sanctions in late September, the Department of War accelerated collaboration with interagency and international partners to enforcement the six UN Security Council resolutions reimposed against Iran. Resolution 1929, in particular, expands the international community's recourse against Iran's ballistic missile program. The Administration has made clear to the global community that it is a shared obligation to enforce snapback sanctions, and that everyone must do their part.

- 97. In your view, what risks, if any, are associated with reducing U.S. military presence in the Middle East with respect to the threat posed by Iran?**

The Department regularly evaluates U.S. force posture in the Middle East to ensure that the United States can deter and take decisive action against Iran, as directed by the President. Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER leaves no doubt that the Joint Force can take decisive action against Iran, without warning and at a time and place of the President's choosing, using capabilities both inside and outside of the region. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that this remains the case.

- 98. What is your assessment of the purpose of and threat posed by Iran's ballistic missile program? To what extent is the U.S. and our partners in the region postured to counter the Iranian ballistic missile threat?**

Iran's ballistic missile program remains a serious threat. Iran's missile barrages in 2024 and 2025, targeting Israel and U.S. forces, illustrate Iran's willingness and ability to endanger military and civilian targets alike. In June, President Trump authorized a tremendous air defense operation, seamlessly integrating with Israeli and other partners' capabilities, to largely thwart hundreds of Iranian ballistic missiles fired during the 12-

Day War. This air defense operation was enabled by decades of U.S. and Israeli collaboration, as well as USCENTCOM's persistent efforts to expand Gulf partners' capabilities. If confirmed, I will work to build on that momentum and accelerate efforts to empower regional partners to do more to defend their citizens and ours.

99. What is your assessment of Iran's support of international terrorism and proxy forces throughout the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility?

Iran continues to support U.S.-designated terrorists who would not hesitate to kill Americans and our partners. From the Houthis in Yemen to Hizballah in Lebanon and the militias in Iraq, Iran aims to hold U.S. interests at risk while attempting to claim plausible deniability. By issuing NSPM-2, re-designating the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, and launching Operation ROUGH RIDER, President Trump has demonstrated his resolve to counter these threats.

Afghanistan

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

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

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

101. What do you view as U.S. strategic interests in Afghanistan?

Ensuring that credible external operations plotting against the U.S. homeland does not emanate from Afghanistan is a key national interest. ISIS-K aspires to enable attacks within the United States. As part of that effort, the department is executing Operation ENDURING SENTINEL to identify potential attacks by terrorist groups in Afghanistan that could target the United States.

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

If confirmed, consistent with President Trump's direction for the Department of War to prioritize defending the U.S. homeland, and the Secretary of War's direction to do the

same, I would do my part to ensure that the Joint Force maintains the ability to neutralize any terrorists in Afghanistan who pose a credible threat to the U.S. homeland.

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

If confirmed, consistent with President Trump's direction for the Department of War to prioritize defending the U.S. homeland, and the Secretary of War's direction to do the same, I would do my part to ensure that the Joint Force maintains the ability to neutralize any terrorists in Afghanistan who pose a credible threat to the U.S. homeland. As part of this effort, if confirmed, I would work to ensure that the DoW, via Operation ENDURING SENTINEL, continues to monitor the state of the threats posed by these groups or their affiliates, especially their ability to threaten the U.S. homeland.

Yemen

104. In your view, what are the U.S. national security interests in Yemen?

Our core interest in Yemen is ensuring that terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS-Yemen cannot conduct attacks against the U.S. homeland. Additionally, Houthi maritime and aerial attacks enabled by Iran's support threaten the territorial defense of Israel, our Gulf partners, and maritime transit through a critical waterway. Following the success of Operation ROUGH RIDER, which restored U.S. freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, the DoW continues to work to enable our regional partners to defend against Houthi threats.

105. What is your assessment of the Iranian-backed Houthi ballistic missile, unmanned aerial vehicle, and other threats emanating from Yemen to U.S. regional partners, U.S. interests, and freedom of navigation?

We continue to monitor the threat that the Houthis pose to the United States, Israel, and our Gulf partners. The President was clear about this when he re-designated the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, and then executed Operation ROUGH RIDER, which was successful in degrading Houthi capability and restoring U.S. freedom of navigation in and around the Red Sea. We will continue to work with other departments and agencies to choke off sources of Houthi revenue generation, which fuels their destabilizing activity.

106. In your view, what role, if any, should the United States play in supporting the regional partners and allies against the Houthis?

The Department is committed to enabling our regional partners to defend against Houthi maritime and aerial threats, including through foreign military sales, training, exercises, and information-sharing.

China

107. Is the current posture of U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support the INDSG? Please explain your answer.

The Secretary of War has directed the Department to prioritize deterring China in the Indo-Pacific. Maintaining combat-credible forces forward is a key aspect of this priority given the essential role of a robust forward defense for deterrence by denial. Consistent with this approach, the DoW postures a significant number of personnel and advanced capabilities forward in the region, most notably to U.S. bases in Guam, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. If confirmed, my priority will be to advance recommendations to the Secretary that strengthen a combat-credible U.S. force posture in the region. This includes ensuring adequate ability to forward deploy submarines, mobile long-range fires, integrated air and missile defense, command and control, and additional capabilities. I believe U.S. forces in-theater remain foundational to our ability to act in real-time alongside our allies and partners to defend our shared interests.

108. China could be prepared to use force to compel unification with Taiwan by 2027. What types of behavior or signaling on the part of China might provide early warning to the United States of Chinese intentions in this regard?

I cannot discuss specific indications and warnings related to a Taiwan contingency in an open forum. That said, China is making investments and engaging in activities that indicate a growing ability to conceal preparations for aggressive action.

109. In your assessment, what are the priority investments DOD could make that would implement the INDSG and enable a more favorable balance of military power in the Indo-Pacific?

In my view, the Department should prioritize capabilities that are most relevant to a denial defense along the First Island Chain, including submarines, bombers, ground-based long-range fires, integrated air and missile defenses, and critical enablers, including capabilities in the space and cyberspace domains, as well as posture improvements (e.g., hardening, dispersal). It is also vitally important for our nation's allies and partners in the region to increase their own defense spending and capabilities in order to enable a robust coalition-based deterrent.

- 110. The NDAA for FY 2021 established the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. What is your assessment of the value of this initiative? What is your assessment of DOD's implementation of this initiative?**

The Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) provides a framework for communicating targeted investments that improve U.S. force posture in the region. I believe PDI provides a useful framework for the Department's continued funding of critical initiatives related to infrastructure, presence, and readiness. Furthermore, PDI supports the development of dispersed and distributed U.S. military operations. My understanding is that activities included in the PDI report are prioritized based on a clear set of strategic objectives and lines of effort, focused on investments that yield tangible deterrence effects within the Future Years Defense Program. If confirmed, I will work with Department stakeholders to ensure PDI advances strategic priorities.

- 111. What non-military activities and resources do you believe are necessary to effectively address the challenge posed by China? Do you believe the activities in which DOD is currently engaged are sufficient? Please explain your answer.**

President Trump has demonstrated the power of strong diplomacy, leveraging both military and non-military means. If confirmed, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the interagency to align our respective organizations' approaches in support of the President's commonsense, America First, Peace Through Strength agenda. In doing so, I believe that we can work collaborative to strengthen military deterrence as well as our own economic security.

- 112. What are the United States' responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act? What policy recommendations do you have for improving U.S. support to Taiwan?**

My understanding is that the implementation of our responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) has remained strong and bipartisan for over forty years. If confirmed, I will continue to uphold our one China policy, consistent with the TRA, the Three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances. If confirmed, I will also provide my best advice and recommendations on the various tools available to rapidly strengthen Taiwan's self-defense capabilities, with a focus on strengthening deterrence by denial against a cross-Strait invasion. Crucially, Taiwan also needs to do more and faster, first and foremost by significantly increasing its defense spending and rapidly acquiring the appropriate weapons and systems needed to deny, and thereby deter, an invasion.

- 113. In your view, what security capabilities should Taiwan acquire to enhance deterrence of Chinese aggression?**

Taiwan must continue to do much more, and much faster, to substantially increase its defense spending, enact legal and policy reforms, and acquire defense equipment best

aligned with an invasion scenario. Capabilities best suited for a denial defense must be prioritized, including mobile, land-based cruise missiles, short-range air defenses, naval mines, unmanned systems, mobile artillery, and man-portable anti-armor systems. Increasing active-duty personnel headcount and investing in resilient communications, logistics, and training infrastructure are equally vital.

114. How should Taiwan prioritize the need to deter China in the steady state environment, respond to grey zone provocations, and prepare to defend against invasion?

Taiwan must do much more for its own defense, with a focus on capabilities optimized for a denial defense against an invasion. The more prepared Taiwan is to defend itself, the more likely China is to be deterred from resorting to military force. Taiwan is also taking measures to deepen civil-military cooperation and strengthen whole-of-society resilience. I believe these efforts are critical to bolstering cross-Strait deterrence.

115. What areas of security capability would you consider appropriate for potential co-production by the United States and Taiwan?

Formal co-production agreements often involve complicated and lengthy negotiations with partners and industry. Since Taiwan must prioritize capabilities that can be delivered as soon as possible to bolster deterrence and support a denial defense, appropriate co-production or similar opportunities should focus on less technically complex capabilities for which Taiwan has existing workforce and production infrastructure.

116. To what extent do you believe multilateral engagement is important for addressing the challenges posed by China? In your view, what are the most important multilateral relationships in the region and where do you perceive opportunities to improve multilateral coordination?

The Department has been moving quickly at the direction of our Secretary of War to strengthen our respective relationships with our allies and partners throughout the Indo-Pacific to deter China. Our position continues to be that allies and partners need to do more for themselves because we know that stronger allies lead to stronger alliances, and stronger alliances deter aggression. We will therefore prioritize engagement that is mutually beneficial and tangibly contributes to regional deterrence with those allies and partners in the Asia-Pacific.

Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific Region

117. In your view, how can DOD more effectively cultivate multilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific?

Strong alliances are foundational to the United States' ability to strengthen and sustain deterrence in the Western Pacific. Consistent with this objective, one of the most important things that the Department can do to reinforce deterrence in the Western Pacific is to incentivize and enable regional allies and partners to strengthen their own defenses as quickly as possible. As our collective military power grows, so too does our ability to reliably deter or respond effectively to aggression. This, in turn, forms the basis for lasting peace through strength.

118. What is the Administration's vision for the Australia, U.K., U.S. (AUKUS) agreement?

President Trump has made clear his desire for AUKUS to be a success, and the Department of War is laser-focused on delivering on the President's intent. As part of this effort, the Department is conducting a review of the AUKUS initiative. This review is being conducted in consultation with U.S. interagency counterparts as well as Australia and the United Kingdom. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting this review and other steps to ensure that AUKUS is a success.

119. The Secretary of Defense is required to appoint a senior civilian official to oversee implementation of all AUKUS related activities across the Department. If confirmed, will you prioritize identification of a senior civilian official to oversee AUKUS activities in the DOD?

Yes.

120. AUKUS is seen as a means for countering the growth of Chinese military power but the expedited technology release and dramatically reduced licensing requirements for defense trade should also improve the United Kingdom's ability to deter Russia. Should AUKUS be redefined to be adversary and theater agnostic?

AUKUS has two lines of effort: Pillar I, relating to the delivery of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines to Australia; and Pillar II, focused on developing and accelerating the delivery of advanced capabilities to the U.S., UK, and Australia. The UK strongly supports AUKUS, noting that the initiative is expected to enhance its industrial capacity, and deliver military platforms that keep the UK and other allies safe. The DoW will work closely with interagency partners and Australia and the United Kingdom as we consider these important questions and the way forward.

121. Does the AUKUS defense trade agreement strengthen deterrence of China?

AUKUS has the potential to significantly enhance deterrence in the Indo-Pacific by

strengthening U.S. force posture in the region, while also bolstering Australia's own military capabilities. Consistent with President Trump's intent, it is therefore vitally important for the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom to work together to ensure that it is a success. To that end, the Department is conducting a review of the AUKUS initiative. This review is being conducted in consultation with U.S. interagency counterparts as well as Australia and the United Kingdom. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting this review and other steps to ensure that AUKUS is successful.

The Optimal Pathway allows for the transfer of up to two Virginia Class submarines to Australia.

122. How will AUKUS improve burden sharing amongst U.S. allies?

As the Department has conducted its review of AUKUS, we have consulted with Australia and the United Kingdom and received their inputs on the impact that the AUKUS partnership contributes to their sovereign defense strategies and capabilities investments. We have seen a shift in Australia's military from being a balanced force to one more focused on the specific challenges Australia is facing. If properly applied, enhanced technology cooperation and industrial integration will provide a greater range of opportunities for AUKUS partners to increase their investments in critical defense capabilities and capacity.

123. Under what conditions should AUKUS be expanded to other U.S. allies?

The ongoing AUKUS review will ensure that the agreement, including any expansion of Pillar II to include additional partners, is tailored to increasing U.S. warfighter lethality and well-aligned with President Trump's America First agenda.

124. What is your assessment of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia, and India?

The Quad is a useful and important framework to coordinate security cooperation between the four nations. If confirmed, I would seek to expand and elevate the Quad's efforts to advance U.S. interests, especially burden-sharing on areas such as maritime security and logistics.

125. Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and the United States have also begun to convene on a regular basis. What is the purpose of this engagement?

Australia, Japan, and the Philippines are all key U.S. allies in the Asia-Pacific. I understand that the four countries meet regularly to advance collective deterrence, operational readiness, and to enhance coordinated military activities, with a focus on the

South China Sea.

- 126. In your view, what are our strategic objectives in building the capacities of partner nations in the Indo-Pacific? How would you prioritize the types of programs or activities that should receive support under security assistance authorities?**

I believe the Department's security cooperation and assistance activities should further U.S. national security objectives, either by enabling foreign security forces to work with the United States on operations or by allowing those forces to take on operations while U.S. forces focus on other priorities.

Over the last several years, China has exerted its influence with our partner nations throughout the Indo-Pacific. Challenged by competition over economic resources, fishing areas, access to water, concerns over rising sea levels, and more, some of our partner nations have voluntarily or involuntarily turned to China for support—in many cases because U.S. engagement has been absent or inadequate.

- 127. In your view, how should DOD seek to engage with partner nations to better support their ability to protect their sovereignty and natural resources?**

I believe building partner capacity in the region should focus, first and foremost, on strengthening deterrence against China. The Department can also work closely with allies and partners to build greater supply chain resiliency through initiatives that focus on critical minerals and rare earth supply chains, including through following the lead of President Trump's recent announcements with Australia and Japan on securing supplies for critical minerals and rare earth materials. If confirmed, I will explore opportunities to partner with others to improve awareness of their maritime domains and to confront criminal encroachment of sovereignty.

- 128. In your opinion, what are the key capabilities the United States should encourage, enable, and support for partners and allies in the Indo-Pacific to enhance deterrence of China?**

To deter China, we need to work with our allies and partners throughout the region to strengthen their defense capabilities. This means allies must significantly increase their defense spending and prioritize capabilities that can effectively deny China's military objectives, particularly asymmetric defensive systems that can operate within contested environments at an affordable cost within the timeline required. Allies like Japan, Australia, the ROK, and the Philippines should develop robust defensive capabilities that can function independently while maintaining interoperability with U.S. forces. We need our strongest allies to move beyond simply hosting U.S. forces to becoming active partners that can defend critical terrain, sea lanes, and infrastructure within their regions, thereby reducing the operational burden on U.S. forces and freeing us up to focus the

Joint Force's unique and advanced capabilities where they are most needed.

North Korea

129. What is your assessment of the current security situation on the Korean peninsula?

North Korea continues to expand its weapons arsenal and poses a threat to South Korea on multiple levels. It also poses a direct nuclear, missile, and unconventional threat to the United States, Japan, and other allies.

130. What has North Korea gained from its support of Russia's war in Ukraine?

Combat in Ukraine has likely afforded North Korea insight into how to fight in a modern, unmanned aerial system (UAS)-rich environment, as well as the opportunity to test indigenously produced ballistic missiles under combat conditions. From unclassified media reporting, it appears that Russia has provided some improved air defense capabilities and likely continues to skirt existing sanctions to provide economic support to the North Korean regime. If confirmed, I will work closely with the U.S. Intelligence Community and our military commanders to understand the implications of North Korean combat experience for U.S. security.

131. How has the alliance between Russia and North Korea impacted U.S. security commitments to and U.S. extended deterrence with Japan and South Korea?

The United States maintains credible extended nuclear deterrence by ensuring our nuclear forces can effectively deter multiple nuclear-armed adversaries simultaneously, which requires modernizing all three legs of our nuclear triad and strengthening our nuclear command, control, and communications architecture to address threats. We are simultaneously encouraging Japan and South Korea to increase defense spending to invest in conventional capabilities that will enhance their ability to deter regional threats.

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

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

133. What policy recommendations would you make to ensure U.S. and allied forces can secure weapons of mass destruction sites in North Korea in the event of a

contingency?

This is an important issue for the Department and, if confirmed, I will work to address this dynamic and complex security issue.

China-Russia Cooperation

- 134. China and Russia have significantly increased their military cooperation since 2019. Is this in response to Trump Administration policies or the inevitable evolution of Putin and Xi's sense of shared interests?**

In my view, the evolution of the Sino-Russian partnership is driven by the belief held by each country's leadership that such collaboration is in their respective interests. This evolution only further underscores the vital need for the United States and its allies and partners to be postured to effectively deter aggression in multiple theaters simultaneously.

- 135. There is considerable speculation about a "reverse Kissinger" that seeks to separate Russia from the Chinese orbit in a manner similar to how Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger separated Maoist China from the Soviet Union in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Is this a viable strategy? What are the similarities and differences between the two eras?**

The United States has a variety of tools that it might use to weaken cooperation between Russia and China. At the same time, President Trump has shown that he is able and willing to achieve diplomatic breakthroughs where nobody else thought it was possible. If confirmed, I will do my part to support the President's diplomatic agenda.

- 136. China and Russia are attempting to divide the U.S. from its allies in Europe and Asia. Are they succeeding? What can the U.S. do to ensure our enemies fail to divide the U.S. from its treaty allies?**

No, they are not succeeding. To the contrary, Chinese and Russian activities over recent years have only clarified and underscored the critical importance of what President Trump has been saying for many years: Our allies and partners must do their part. Whether it is in Europe or the Indo-Pacific, allies and partners shouldering their fair share of the burden of our collective defense is critically important for achieving lasting peace through strength—and, as a result of President Trump's historic leadership, they are doing so. This will make our alliances far stronger than they have been in decades.

Russia

- 137. In your view, does Russia pose an existential threat to the United States and its**

allies?

Russia's nuclear forces pose an existential threat to the United States and its allies. Russia also poses a serious and enduring conventional military threat to NATO allies in Eastern Europe.

138. In your view, which U.S. European Command and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) activities most effectively deter Russia and mitigate the Russian threat to NATO Allies and partners?

NATO allies' efforts to step up and take the lead in the conventional defense of Europe, enabled by the historic defense spending increases agreed to at the Hague Summit, under the leadership of President Trump, will be the most decisive step that the Alliance takes toward bolstering our collective deterrence and defense against Russia in the coming years. USEUCOM and NATO can most effectively deter Russia and mitigate the Russian threat to NATO allies by incentivizing and enabling allies to accelerate defense spending increases and then allocate those increases against the most important capabilities required for deterring Russian aggression, with particular focus on the eastern front.

139. What aspects of U.S. and NATO force posture do you assess as having the most significant deterrent effect on Russia?

Credible deterrence depends on combat-capable forces, and NATO's conventional and nuclear capabilities serve an important role in deterring the Russia threat. NATO's air capabilities, including 5th-generation fighters and robust command and control capabilities, are critical to deterring Russia. Additionally, NATO's large-scale exercises, vigilance and enhanced vigilance activities, and deployed Forward Land Forces also provide important deterrent effects. Russia must understand that NATO allies possess the will and the capability to deny any military aggression against the Alliance—even in the event of simultaneous aggression in multiple theaters. This is the heart of why it is so vital for our allies to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense, as the Secretary has said. At the same time, NATO's nuclear force posture, underpinned by U.S. nuclear weapons forward deployed in Europe as well as the U.S. strategic triad, is a core element of our deterrence policy and strategy, successfully deterring Russian aggression against NATO for decades. As the backbone of deterrence since its founding, NATO nuclear policy seeks to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression.

140. Why is Russia pursuing novel anti-satellite and counterspace capabilities?

Our adversaries view U.S. space capabilities as a critical warfighting advantage for the United States, and they no doubt would like to deny us this advantage and preclude our ability to project power globally. If confirmed, I will ensure that we continue to prioritize a force posture that protects our ability to enable the Joint force in and through space.

141. In your view, what more should the DOD do to counter Russian malign influence in Europe?

The Department of War can help to counter Russian malign influence in Europe is to work closely with NATO allies to strengthen deterrence against Russia, including by incentivizing and enabling NATO allies to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense. As our allies' militaries grow stronger, NATO will be in a much stronger position not only to deter or respond to Russian military aggression but also to take other steps to address Russian malign influence in Europe.

Ukraine

142. In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale, unprovoked, and illegal invasion on Ukraine. What is your view of the role that the Department of Defense should play in assisting Ukraine in their fight to defend their freedom and sovereignty?

President Trump has made it a priority to end the war in Ukraine as quickly as possible on terms that support an enduring peace. I strongly support the President's efforts in this regard. I also believe that the Department has a critical role to play in support of the President's efforts, for instance, by providing opportunities for NATO allies to purchase weapons that can then be used to support Ukraine's defense. The Department has also played an essential role in incentivizing and enabling allies to do more for their defense, more broadly, building on President Trump's historic success at the Hague Summit. As they do so, they will improve their respective abilities not only to defend themselves but also to help others, like Ukraine, strengthening our collective ability to secure and sustain lasting peace through strength in Europe.

143. What do you believe to be Russia's military objectives in Ukraine?

It is my understanding that Russia seeks, at a minimum, Russian sovereignty over Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk Oblasts in addition to Russian control of other territories it currently holds along the front line.

144. What do you believe would be the implications for U.S. national security interests if Russia were able to achieve its goals in Ukraine?

The Russian military poses a serious threat to Eastern Europe, including NATO allies. This is why it is essential that Europe step up and lead in both support to Ukraine and conventional deterrence and defense of the European continent. While the United States will continue to provide critical but more limited support, including our extended nuclear deterrent, European efforts will be crucial in ensuring Russia remains deterred from

provoking a broader war with NATO. Beyond the European continent, Russia's nuclear, missile, and other asymmetric capabilities pose a direct military threat to the United States. The Department remains committed to defending the U.S. homeland from these threats, even as we work closely with allies to forge a strong shield of deterrence forward in Europe.

145. What do you believe to be the main lessons we learned from war in Ukraine?

I believe that the main lesson that we learned from the war in Ukraine is that great power rivalry is real, it is deadly, and the United States and our allies must be prepared if we are to deter or prevail in conflict in the years ahead. This, in turn, relates to the next primary lesson that I believe we have learned, which is that there are no shortcuts to fielding a credible defense. That means that our allies must invest adequately in their defenses in order to generate and sustain the military power required to deter Russia, or respond effectively in cases where deterrence fails, including by supporting Ukraine's defense. Fortunately, as a result of President Trump's historic leadership, they are doing so now.

We have also learned lessons about the role of unmanned systems on the battlefield, including how they can be used to complement, or in some cases, replace, more traditional capabilities in an effective and cost-effective manner.

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

This is an ongoing conflict, and thus an iterative process that is informed by lessons we are continuing to learn from the battlefield. The Department is conducting classified analysis on that data, and if confirmed, I will ensure that the applicable lessons learned from the conflict in Ukraine are incorporated into DoW policies to best prepare our warfighters for future conflicts.

147. Do you believe it is important for the United States to continue providing security assistance to Ukraine, including after the conclusion of the war, as a means to help to help Ukraine deter and defeat Russian aggression? If not, why not?

I believe it is important for Ukraine to be sufficiently armed to ensure its self-defense and serve as a credible deterrent to Russia, even after the conclusion of the war. As the President and Secretary have made clear, the United States has already contributed substantially to Ukraine's defense, and the United States has urgent and major priorities elsewhere, especially defense of the U.S. homeland and deterring China in the Indo-Pacific. In light of this, the solution, as the President and Secretary have emphasized, is for Europe to lead efforts to arm Ukraine on an enduring basis. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to advance this overall approach.

148. What do you believe would be the implications for U.S. national security interests if allies and partners believe the United States no longer stands with Ukraine?

Russia will pose a threat to the United States and our NATO allies, particularly in Eastern Europe, for the foreseeable future. It is therefore vitally important that we work to strengthen NATO so that it is able to deter and respond effectively to Russian aggression over the long haul, even in the event of simultaneous conflicts in multiple theaters. For these reasons, as the President and the Secretary of War have emphasized, it is vitally important for our NATO allies to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense, including support for Ukraine's defense. In this way, we can set conditions for lasting peace through strength throughout the European theater, including in Ukraine.

149. Do you believe potential adversaries like China or North Korea are watching the conduct of United States in this war and its outcome?

I believe China and North Korea are watching the war in Ukraine with interest. They have also indirectly and directly supported Russia. For instance, North Korea has actively defended Russian territory with nearly 12,000 combat troops.

150. If so, what lessons do you believe they are learning?

China has likely learned a range of lessons from the war in Ukraine. They are almost certainly paying attention to the important role drones and electronic warfare are playing. I also expect China to have noted the dangers associated with failing to win decisively and getting drawn into a protracted conflict.

Combat in Ukraine has likely afforded the DPRK insight into how to fight in a modern, unmanned aerial vehicle-dense environment, as well as the opportunity to test indigenously produced ballistic missiles under combat conditions.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

151. What are your views on the importance of the NATO Alliance? Do you believe there are areas where the United States could benefit from greater coordination and consultation with Allies?

I believe strongly in the value of NATO. This Alliance won the Cold War, and I believe it can be as effective in this century as it was in the last. For that to happen, however, our allies must do their part. Very fortunately—as a result of President Trump's historic leadership—they are.

The Hague Summit pledge to raise defense spending to five percent of GDP is nothing short of transformational, and it will allow our allies to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense. As they increase and sustain investments in their military forces and enabling infrastructure, the balance of military power in the European theater will shift decisively in the direction of the Alliance. This, in turn, will set conditions for lasting peace through strength in Europe, even in the face of simultaneous challenges in other regions of the world. And NATO will be at the very heart of it.

As Secretary Hegseth has said, "The United States remains committed to the NATO Alliance and to the defense partnership with Europe, full stop." If confirmed, I will prioritize working closely with partners across the DoW, interagency, and NATO itself to advance the President's vision for a stronger and more sustainable Alliance.

152. In your opinion, what are the greatest challenges for NATO?

In my view, NATO has a preeminent role in deterring and managing threats from Russia due to geography and Russian military and political aspirations. The Russian military poses a serious threat to Eastern Europe, including NATO members. Its nuclear, missile, and other asymmetric capabilities also pose a direct military threat to the United States and the rest of NATO, among other allies.

NATO must focus on its core mission—being a military alliance to defend the member states in the Euro-Atlantic area. Our allies must take primary responsibility for defense of the continent, beginning with increasing defense spending. Committing to five percent of GDP on defense spending was nothing short of transformational. Now, allies must make good on their commitment to raise spending and then invest those new resources in the combat-credible forces and capabilities required to deter and defend against Russian aggression. At the same time, we must also strengthen the transatlantic industrial base to deliver more critical munitions and other key capabilities to our collective arsenals.

153. What are the most important capability improvements that the Alliance must make to deal with the threat from Russia?

I would recommend allies aggressively and urgently operationalize the commitment at this year's NATO Summit at The Hague to increasing defense spending to 5% of GDP. Europe must field real and large-scale combat capabilities as quickly as possible. As an interim step, allies should use the capability targets that Defense Ministers agreed to in June 2025 as the framework and road map to guide the increased spending, coupled with robust exercises to hone and validate NATO's capabilities. Further analysis is ultimately required, however, to determine which capabilities and force structure will best allow our NATO allies to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense and should therefore be the focus of their defense investments. If confirmed, I would work closely with my counterparts in the Joint Staff, USEUCOM, and other relevant components as part of this analysis. I would also look forward to engaging allies on the results of this

analysis and related recommendations.

154. If confirmed, what would be your top defense priorities for engagement with NATO Allies and partners on issues relating to China?

I believe we should focus our allies' efforts on areas where their interests and capabilities are naturally strong, rather than try to induce everyone to act everywhere, as if their interests are all the same. As the United States prioritizes the homeland and deterring China in the Indo-Pacific, I believe that we should look for European allies to step up to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense. Thus, I would urge these allies to bolster their regional capabilities, with a clear focus on deploying and sustaining combat-credible forces in the European theater. I would likewise urge them to be mindful of areas in which Chinese presence or activities might threaten NATO's ability to defend Europe effectively, such as Chinese companies' large investments in European transportation, telecommunication, and other infrastructure.

155. What, in your opinion, are the most useful measurements of allied commitments to carrying the burden of common security and collective defense?

The United States will closely track our NATO allies' follow-through on their Hague Summit commitment increasing defense spending to five percent of GDP, with 3.5% on core defense requirements and 1.5% on defense and security related areas. We will also work closely with our allies as they operationalize the defense spending commitment, procure the capabilities and forces required to defend the Alliance, and transition to a European-led NATO. Metrics include force readiness levels, personnel manning levels for both active and reserve forces, fulfillment of capability targets, and expansion of Europe's defense industrial base. These are all measurements that the United States will look for in allies as they take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense.

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

I believe U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe play a key role in extended deterrence. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO's identity as a nuclear alliance is critical. U.S. forward-deployed nuclear weapons are a critical component of NATO's nuclear posture, allowing for burden-sharing among allies and bolstering deterrence against our adversaries. At a time when NATO faces nuclear saber rattling from Russia, and as Russia continues to modernize its nuclear forces, NATO's status as a nuclear Alliance continues to deter conflict and coercion against the Alliance.

Africa

157. What is your understanding of the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategy (INDS) and its implications for the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) area of responsibility (AOR)?

It is my understanding that the Department's priorities in Africa include counterterrorism and, alongside other elements of the U.S. interagency, countering certain Chinese activities in the African continent. To the former, President Trump has made clear that the United States will take decisive action against terrorists who pose a credible threat to the U.S. homeland. The Department is postured accordingly in the USAFRICOM AOR, so that we are able to neutralize terrorists with the intent and capability to strike the U.S. homeland. We also stand ready to take decisive action against other targets, as directed by the President. Finally, the Department is monitoring Chinese activities in the African continent, with particular eye toward Chinese efforts to expand access and placement in locations or ways that threaten our nation's defense or economic interests.

158. What is your understanding of U.S. strategic objectives in Africa and what role do you believe AFRICOM should play in supporting these objectives?

It is my understanding that the Department's priorities in Africa include counterterrorism and, alongside other elements of the U.S. interagency, countering certain Chinese activities in the African continent. To the former, President Trump has made clear that the United States will take decisive action against terrorists who pose a credible threat to the U.S. homeland. The Department is postured accordingly in the USAFRICOM AOR, so that we are able to neutralize terrorists with the intent and capability to strike the U.S. homeland. We also stand ready to take decisive action against other targets, as directed by the President. Finally, the Department is monitoring Chinese activities in the African continent, with particular eye toward Chinese efforts to expand access and placement in locations or ways that threaten our nation's defense or economic interests.

159. In your view, what does "great power competition" look like in the AFRICOM AOR?

China and Russia are heavily engaged in the African continent. They seek to advance their own agendas, often at the expense of African nations and the United States. China's military and economic influence on the continent continues to grow, and Beijing looks to African countries to support its global objectives. Russia uses irregular means to assert influence in Africa, including through paramilitary deployments and disinformation campaigns. In this context, USAFRICOM monitors China and Russia's activities in Africa to assess and counter direct threats to U.S. strategic interests.

160. Are U.S. policies and programs, as applicable to Africa, appropriate to ensure the United States can succeed in great power competition in the AFRICOM AOR? Are there additional measures we should be considering? What do you perceive as the

areas of highest risk?

The Department of War is developing its NDS and will review its programs and activities and allocation of resources to ensure USAFRICOM can achieve NDS objectives. The United States can counter the negative influence of Beijing and Moscow in Africa, particularly by offering African partners an alternative to Chinese or Russian predatory practices. However, we recognize that the USAFRICOM AOR includes 53 countries with diverse objectives and relationships. It is difficult to generalize about these countries' objectives and desires for partnership.

The greatest areas of risk are the expansion of China's basing in Africa beyond Djibouti that could pose risks to sea lines of communications and U.S. trade and market access to critical minerals required by the defense industrial base.

161. Do you believe the Command's resources and authorities are aligned in a manner consistent with U.S. strategic objectives?

Notwithstanding that USAFRICOM has relatively few assigned forces and historically been allocated fewer resources than most other Combatant Commands, the command continues to leverage both existing authorities and the contributions of regional partners to achieve U.S. strategic objectives. Following publication of the 2025 NDS, the Department will work closely with CDRUSAFRICOM to review objectives, missions, and the authorities and resources available to achieve them.

162. If confirmed, what would you do to enhance or expedite the implementation of the U.S.'s strategic objectives in AFRICOM?

African nations share many of the United States' strategic interests, and many are willing to collaborate in support of shared goals, to include degrading terrorist groups and countering Chinese activities. The Department of War will conduct a timely review of strategic objectives and available resources once the NDS is published.

163. If confirmed, how would you seek to balance the requirements for increased emphasis on great power competition with China and Russia with countering violent extremism in the AFRICOM AOR?

The Secretary has directed us to prioritize defense of the U.S. homeland, including against terrorists with the capability and intent to strike the American homeland. He has also directed us to prioritize deterring China in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will support CDRUSAFRICOM and his team as they work to achieve these objectives in the USAFRICOM AOR.

Latin America and the Caribbean

164. How do you define U.S. national security interests in Latin America and the Caribbean?

President Trump has been clear—the days in which narco-terrorists could operate freely in the Western Hemisphere are over. He has been equally clear about the need for us to protect U.S. access to key terrain throughout the Western Hemisphere, such as the Panama Canal, including by denying foreign adversaries’ ability to prevent us from exercising such access. If confirmed, I would support the Department’s efforts to achieve these and other objectives set by the President and the Secretary of War.

165. What should be the Department’s top priorities in Latin America and the Caribbean?

President Trump has been clear—the days in which narco-terrorists could operate freely in the Western Hemisphere are over. He has been equally clear about the need for us to protect U.S. access to key terrain throughout the Western Hemisphere, such as the Panama Canal, including by denying foreign adversaries’ ability to prevent us from exercising such access. If confirmed, I would support the Department’s efforts to achieve these and other objectives set by the President and the Secretary of War.

166. What is your assessment of Chinese and Russian strategic objectives in Latin America and the Caribbean? In what ways, if any, do these objectives conflict with those of the United States?

I understand that China and Russia have pursued access and placement in different parts of the Western Hemisphere, which they have used or may seek to use to advance their own objectives at the expense of U.S. economic and national security. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts in the DoW and interagency to identify opportunities for the United States to deter or respond effectively to these kinds of encroachments, building on the success that the President has already had.

167. What is your assessment of the strategic and security concerns related to China’s space-cooperation with Latin American countries, in particular Argentina, Chile, and Brazil?

The President and the Secretary of War have made clear that defending our nation’s interests in the Western Hemisphere is a critical priority for our national security. Consistent with this approach, I believe it is imperative we work proactively to address concerns related to Chinese space cooperation with certain Latin American countries, given the implications of such cooperation for U.S. national security. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts in the DoW and interagency to achieve this objective.

- 168. In your view, what would be the appropriate role for the Department of Defense in addressing the sources of instability in the region, including criminal violence, drug production and trafficking, and corruption?**

President Trump has been clear—the days in which narco-terrorists could operate freely in the Western Hemisphere are over. It is my view that this an entirely appropriate objective given the scale of the destruction that these organizations have levied on the American people over many years. If confirmed, I would work with my counterparts in the DoW and the interagency to advance the President’s intent of preventing these organizations from continuing to poison Americans.

Integrated Air & Missile Defense

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

- 169. If confirmed as DUSD(P), what would be your priorities for U.S. missile defense capabilities for the homeland?**

If confirmed, I would support implementation of President Trump’s Golden Dome for America, which seeks to defend our nation’s homeland against ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missiles, as well as other advanced aerial threats. Delivering on Golden Dome is vital not just to protect American lives but also our ability to generate, project, and sustain military power from the U.S. homeland. Critically, it is also an important complement to and enabler of our nuclear deterrent, which forms the bedrock of our nation’s defense.

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

The Senate has confirmed General Guetlein to serve as the Golden Dome for America Direct Reporting Program Manager, reporting directly to the Deputy Secretary of War. If confirmed, I look forward to working with General Guetlein and other key leaders around the DoW, including from the Military Services and Defense Agencies, on this critical initiative.

In January of this year, the President issued an executive order, “The Iron Dome for America” which outlined an ambitious plan for developing a comprehensive integrated air and missile defense architecture for the United States. Since renamed the “Golden Dome”,

this architecture portends a capability to address all forms of missile threats, regardless of their origin, unlike current missile defenses, which are primarily designed to counter North Korean and Iranian systems.

171. What is your understanding of this architecture?

The President has directed that the Department develop a layered architecture based on next generation technology to provide for the defense of the American homeland and its citizens. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with General Guetlein on related requirements to meet the ambitious vision set out by the President.

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

As the President's Executive Order outlines, Golden Dome is designed to protect our nation's homeland and citizens. It must be stressed that China and Russia have been rapidly modernizing, diversifying, and expanding their respective missile forces, including missiles designed to range the U.S. homeland, since long before President Trump initiated Golden Dome for America.

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

Recent operations demonstrate the critical role of integrated air and missile defenses, including for base defense. Fielding and sustaining these capabilities are vital not just for protecting the lives of American servicemembers but also for ensuring that the Joint Force is able to project force and operate effectively against our nation's adversaries. Doing so is therefore a critical element of the Department's strategy to deter China in the Indo-Pacific as well as to achieve other objectives. If confirmed, I will ensure that these requirements are properly reflected in the appropriate strategic guidance documents. I will also ensure that the OUSW(P) is properly engaged in the Program and Budget Review process in order to advocate for the required investments and identify and leverage opportunities for effective integration of existing and forthcoming capabilities.

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.

174. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure the Department appropriately prioritizes and resources detection and defeat capabilities for UAS that pose a threat

to U.S. military assets?

There is no question that UASs pose a unique and serious threat to U.S. military forces and infrastructure, including in the U.S. homeland. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts in the DoW and interagency to ensure that U.S. military commanders have the situational awareness, capabilities, guidance, and authorities required to defend U.S. military assets effectively, recognizing that the specific ways in which they may be able to do so may differ based on the type and location of the threat, nature of the response options available, and other considerations, including local, state, and federal regulations.

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

Yes.

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

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

Theater missile defenses play a critical role in the Joint Force's ability to project power abroad, especially in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will prioritize ensuring that the Department has the theater missile defenses required to achieve the objectives set forth by the Secretary.

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

Yes, I believe that it is in America's interest for our allies and partners to field additional air and missile defense capabilities of their own across theaters. This not only expands the overall capacity of this defensive architecture, thereby reinforcing deterrence from an operational perspective. It is also an important signal of these

countries' resolve to defend themselves, which also enhances deterrence. If confirmed, I would prioritize seeking and advancing opportunities to incentivize and enable allies and partners to field more of these capabilities. I would also work closely with my counterparts in the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Acquisition and Sustainment (OUSW(A&S)) to align, sequence, and support allied and partner interest in acquiring these capabilities.

Nuclear

Nuclear Policy and Force Modernization

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

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

Yes. U.S. nuclear forces underpin our entire deterrence and defense posture. I agree that nuclear deterrence should remain DoW's top priority mission and that ensuring we retain a modern, capable, and effective nuclear deterrent should be our top priority.

- 179. What is your understanding of how Russia, China, and North Korea have expanded and/or modernized their nuclear force capabilities? In your view, do these capabilities pose an increasing threat to the United States and its allies?**

I agree with Secretary Hegseth's assessment that China, Russia, and North Korea have significantly expanded and modernized their nuclear force capabilities. These improvements, which include advances in warheads, delivery systems, and command and control systems, pose an increasingly severe threat to the United States and its allies and partners. My understanding is that the pace of China's nuclear force growth, in particular, has exceeded U.S. expectations.

- 180. 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 that U.S. strategic forces must be able to deter more than one nuclear power and provide the President with credible response options if deterrence fails. What precisely

that entails in light of the state of our industrial base, the needs of our conventional forces, allied capabilities, and other salient factors, would be a primary focus for me, if confirmed.

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

I assess that the United States maintains credible options for extended nuclear deterrence in Europe and Asia. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that that remains the case.

182. 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.

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

I commit to advocating for fully funding efforts to modernize our nuclear forces, while also meeting the other top priorities for the Department, especially a conventional denial defense force vis-a-vis China and defending the U.S. homeland.

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

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

I do not believe an NFU policy would be advisable, and I would advocate against one, if confirmed.

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

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

Yes. A core tenet of U.S. nuclear strategy since the Cold War has been that only the President of the United States can authorize or terminate the use of U.S. nuclear weapons. This principle is based on preserving civilian control of military forces and ensuring that the United States maintains the ability to respond in a timely manner to strategic attacks.

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

- 186. By statute, the USD(P) is a member of the Nuclear Weapons Council. In your view, what are the most significant issues the Council should take up in the coming years?**

The planned modernization of nearly every element of the nuclear enterprise—while also ensuring there are no gaps in capabilities during the transition—is, and will continue to be, the primary challenge for the Nuclear Weapons Council in the following years.

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

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

Yes, I support the recapitalization and revitalization of NNSA infrastructure for improved and accelerated design, manufacture, and sustainment of the nuclear weapons stockpile.

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

Yes.

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

I do.

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.

- 190. If confirmed, will you commit to expeditiously implementing this reform and working with the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment to ensure resources, personnel, and policies are reallocated and revised to support the standup of the Assistant Secretary?**

Yes. If confirmed, I will work with other Department senior leaders to ensure that the Office of the ASW for Nuclear Deterrence, Chemical, and Biological Defense Policy and Programs has the resources, personnel, and policies required for it to provide proper oversight of nuclear policies, programs, and operations, among other equities.

Arms Control

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

- 191. 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?**

The United States should pursue arms control when it is in the U.S. national security interest to do so. Specifically, I believe that DoW should seek arms control agreements that enhance U.S. security, are stabilizing, and are effectively verifiable. If confirmed, I will assess the multiple variables that inform the necessary size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

- 192. What are your views on the military significance of Russian tactical nuclear forces not covered by the New START Treaty and whether arms control measures can adequately address them?**

My understanding is that Russia fields a large and diverse arsenal of theater-range nuclear forces that are not covered by New START, which directly threaten our allies and U.S. forces forward. These capabilities add complexity and create challenges to our ability to defend U.S. interests in Europe and elsewhere. I believe we should be investigating ways to bring these weapons into a verifiable arms control treaty with

Russia. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues in the Departments of War and State to identify options for arms control for Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons.

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

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

A verifiable arms control agreement that limits the number of warheads rather than delivery systems could be in our national interest depending on the specific provisions. However, I believe we must take China's nuclear arsenal into consideration even if we pursue bilateral agreements with Russia.

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

New START is scheduled to expire in February 2026. I believe that the United States should pursue further arms control agreements where it is clearly in our interest to do so. If confirmed, I will support efforts to that end.

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

While I believe it is prudent to prepare for all possibilities in negotiations, I am skeptical about such potential constraints on U.S. forces, particularly given the current security environment. My sense is that arms control has been most successful when focused on nuclear forces. If confirmed, I would discuss these options with other relevant DoW and interagency colleagues.

Irregular Warfare

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

196. What is your understanding of the inherent authority of the Secretary of Defense to conduct irregular warfare operations?

The Secretary holds the authority, delegated from the President, to direct irregular warfare (IW) operations. This authority extends to conducting clandestine IW operations to safeguard the United States, its allies, and its interests, within legal constraints and policy guidance. This authority is balanced with oversight and the need for interagency cooperation to ensure alignment with broader national security objectives.

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

I believe there are opportunities for IW to be used as an effective complement to other aspects of the Joint Force and its operations. If confirmed, I would seek to develop and leverage those opportunities.

198. What is your assessment of the role of irregular warfare in adversary's efforts to undermine U.S. national security interests and DOD objectives?

I understand that many of our adversaries use IW as part of their own strategies to undermine U.S. national security interests and DoW objectives.

Relations with Congress

199. What are your views on the state of the relationship between the OUSD(P) and the Senate Armed Services Committee, in particular, and with the Congress in general?

If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with Congress, and this Committee in particular, in a forthright manner. I acknowledge that there will be instances in which I am unable to share all the information that the Committee may wish to receive, or that I may wish to share. If confirmed, however, I am committed to sharing as much information as possible in a timely manner. In this way, I would hope to alleviate any potential points of friction.

200. If confirmed, what would you do to address any potential points of friction?

If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with Congress, and this Committee in particular, in a forthright manner. I acknowledge that there will be instances in which I am unable to share all the information that the Committee may wish to receive, or that I may wish to share. If confirmed, however, I am committed to sharing as much information as possible in a timely manner. In this way, I would hope to alleviate any potential points of friction.

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.

- 201. 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 yes or no.**

Yes.

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

Yes.

- 203. 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 yes or no.**

Yes.

- 204. 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 yes or no.**

Yes.

- 205. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees with records and other information**

**within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request?
Please answer yes or no.**

Yes.

- 206. 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 yes or no.**

Yes.

- 207. 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 yes or no.**

Yes.