

TO CONDUCT A CONFIRMATION HEARING ON
THE EXPECTED NOMINATION OF LLOYD J.
AUSTIN III TO BE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

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**TO CONDUCT A CONFIRMATION HEARING ON
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TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2021

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:01 p.m., in room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator James M. Inhofe (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Inhofe, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Blackburn, Hawley, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Heinrich, Warren, Peters, Manchin, and Duckworth.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE

Chairman INHOFE. Since this is my last Committee meeting to be important, we will start right on time. Got that, Jack? All right.

The Committee meets today to consider expected nomination of Mr. Lloyd J. Austin III to be Secretary of Defense of the United States of America.

Thank all of you guys for being here. It has been a hardship on many of you, and it was on me, too, and we are able to get this done.

So, Mr. Austin, we welcome you, and a warm welcome to Charlene, your wife of more than 41 years. My wife and I were 61 years. Think you will make it?

[Laughter.]

Chairman INHOFE. All right. We are very happy—Mr. Austin, you will be introduced now by Senator Sullivan, a member of our committee.

Senator Sullivan?

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The last time we were together as Senators our Capitol was under siege. America's authoritarian rivals abroad have been gloating about our disunity. Democracy brings chaos, they tell their people. Better to have a strong hand that keeps order.

We live in an imperfect democracy, no doubt, and the American I am proud and honored to introduce, Mr. Lloyd Austin, understands our imperfections more than many. But on closer inspection, the world's dictators have little to celebrate. Congress went back to work on January 6th to count Electoral College votes. Tomorrow,

there will be a transfer of power at the top of our Government, as there has been since the founding of our republic.

At some point, Chinese and Russian citizens will ask, “Why can we not do that? Why do we not have strong, resilient institutions that ensure the regular election of new leaders and, thus, self-government in the people?” When these questions are asked, authoritarians like Xi Jinping and Putin will not be gloating anymore because they do not have answers.

What does this all have to do with Lloyd Austin? A lot. Mr. Austin has been nominated to lead one of America’s most trusted institutions, the Department of Defense (DOD). Many of us have worked hard to rebuild our military, and we can all agree that there has been too much turmoil at the top. As its civilian leader, I am confident that Mr. Austin will bring steadiness, leadership, and respect to this indispensable institution.

I got to know Mr. Austin in 2005 and 2006. Serving together in an Army heavy combatant command, conducting combat operations throughout the Middle East, we had what might be described today as an uneven power relationship. He was a two-star general. I was a major. He had spent decades on Active Duty. I was a Reservist. He was a soldier. I was a marine.

I was just one of hundreds of field-grade infantry officers recalled to Active Duty deployed in the region during a challenging time for our Nation. But when I asked for his help, Mr. Austin gave it. When I had a problem, he listened, and when I asked for guidance on an important mission, he provided it.

A critical hallmark of exceptional leadership, especially for organizations like the Pentagon, is not just how one treats superiors, but how one treats subordinates. What I saw was respect, integrity, and someone who gets things done in a difficult environment. It is clear to me that the core principles of Mr. Austin’s life has been duty, honor, and country.

That may sound quaint to some, but I think having individuals of impeccable character at the top of our Government is more important than ever. Other than integrity, there is no singular requirement for the difficult job of Secretary of Defense. But as the former director of the Joint Staff and United States Central Command (CENTCOM) commander, Mr. Austin certainly has insights on critical issues, such as interagency budget battles, working with our allies, and congressional oversight.

Mr. Austin is fully committed to the constitutional principle of civilian control of our military, something that those who serve in uniform typically understand and revere more than those who do not. In that regard, I thought some of the testimony from our recent hearing on this important topic was a bit simplistic, with discussions about so-called military logic versus political logic. So let me play devil’s advocate.

The very nature of this confirmation hearing is evidence that civilian control of the military is not at risk in America. I believe the related, but opposite problem should be of more concern today—no military experience in the top ranks of our Government.

With the exception of Mr. Austin, no nominee on the incoming Biden national security team has ever served in uniform. With re-

gard to the entire Biden Cabinet, only one other nominee has any military experience at all. This is not wise.

If confirmed, I am sure I will not agree with all of Mr. Austin's decisions. But when the inevitable budget battles occur, it will be critical for our Nation's security and military members to have a Secretary of Defense who understands firsthand the very real morale and readiness problems that result from drastic cuts to our military.

Let me conclude with this. We are living through difficult times—a pandemic, racial tensions, riots, turmoil at the top of the Pentagon, and rising dangers from China, Russia, and Iran. Mr. Austin's confirmation will not solve all these problems, but it will help. He represents the best of America, a man of integrity, humility, and character, with a wealth of relevant experience.

Our allies will take comfort in his confirmation, and our adversaries will take pause. As America's first black Secretary of Defense, he will be an inspiration to millions both in and out of uniform.

I urge my colleagues to support his confirmation and the waiver it requires.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Sullivan. I do agree with your comments wholeheartedly, and I believe that we are going to be doing the right thing here.

Now we have another introduction by Secretary Panetta, a former Secretary of Defense and former—very close friend of mine, served together in the House together, and it has been too long, Secretary Panetta. You are recognized for your part of this introduction.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Inhofe, I always enjoyed our friendship, going back to the House of Representatives.

Ranking Member Reed and distinguished members of this committee, it is an honor for me to again have the opportunity to appear before this distinguished committee, this time alongside Senator Dan Sullivan, to introduce President-Elect Biden's nominee to be the 28th Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin.

We do meet at a time of great peril for our Nation, but it is also a time of great promise. We have endured a harrowing year, dealing with a deadly pandemic and, most recently, the violent attack on our Capitol, this Congress, and our democracy itself. Our adversaries are watching very closely. They are trying to determine whether America will remain the strongest and most resilient democracy the world has ever known.

It is also a time of great promise. Tomorrow at this time, our country will have a new President, a man who many of you know personally from his decades of service as a United States Senator. A man who I have known for over 40 years and had the privilege to work with during my years in the Congress, in the White House, and I was honored to serve him when he was Vice President as CIA Director and Secretary of Defense.

Joe Biden is absolutely committed to ensuring that we remain the strongest military power on the face of the Earth. He believes that we must have the best-trained, best-equipped, and most capa-

ble fighting force in the world, and he believes that the Department of Defense must be led by someone who not only knows the issues of war and peace, but also knows the heart and soul of the women and men who bravely wear the uniform, put their lives on the line, and fight for our freedom. That is why he selected Lloyd Austin to serve as Secretary of Defense.

Lloyd's accomplishments at the Department of Defense are without peer. He graduated from West Point. He led troops at almost every level, commanded in combat, served as America's military commander during the drawdown in Iraq. He served as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and as commanding general of the U.S. Central Command. All of you know that that is one of the key combat commands at the Department of Defense.

I met Lloyd when I came to DOD as Secretary in July of 2011. We had just 6 months to implement the drawdown in Iraq, and Lloyd was the man on the ground charged with getting it done. It was a huge logistical task.

He consulted carefully with the President, with the Vice President, the National Security Adviser, his colleagues at the State Department, and those in the Intelligence Community. He carried out with diligence and professionalism the plan that was set forth by me and other civilian leaders at the Pentagon. He had to negotiate with the Iraqis, who were not easy to negotiate with at that time, and ensured that our troops and all of their equipment could redeploy safely while protecting America's core national security interests.

I mention this episode because I know that many of you are wondering whether a former general officer can uphold the principle of civilian control of the military. I have spoken to Lloyd, and there is no doubt in my mind that he will uphold the principle of civilian control. Frankly, the best military officers that I had the honor to serve with are those who understand the importance of civilian control, and Lloyd was one of those.

He will respect the civilian chain of command, enshrined not only in tradition, but in law. He will ensure there is transparency and accountability at the Pentagon. He will make himself and Department leaders available to this committee and to the Congress for oversight, and he will provide regular briefings to the American people.

He will support the appointment of civilian leaders across the Office of the Secretary and the Department. He knows that while we cannot defend our Nation without our Armed Forces, we cannot defend our democratic form of government without strong civilian stewardship of our national security.

Lloyd Austin is a man of uncommon character and decency and courage. He is a trailblazer, feared by our enemies and admired by those that he led. He was the first African-American general officer to lead the Army Corps in combat. He was the first African American to command an entire theater of war. If confirmed, he will be the first African American to lead the Department of Defense.

In sum, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I believe that Lloyd Austin is the right person at the right time, a man that we need at this moment to lead the Department of Defense. He is clear-eyed about the threats, and we know there are a number of

threats we are dealing with abroad—China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, cyber attackers, and terrorists.

He understands the value of alliances and keeping them strong and supporting them, and he is prepared to shoulder the awesome burden of sending our best men and women in uniform, if necessary, into harm's way, the most difficult task we, who have been Secretary of Defense, had to assume.

As Americans watched the tragic images from the Capitol Rotunda on January 6th, I was reminded of one painting in that space that has always represented for me the ideal of service to country. That is the oil painting of George Washington resigning his commission as general in the Army so that he could assume the duties of being the Nation's first President.

It is a statement about our democratic form of government that has stood the test of time in that hallowed citadel of liberty. The tradition of military leaders from Washington, Eisenhower, Marshall, to the large number of veterans who are serving in Congress today, including my own son, of taking off our uniforms, returning to civilian life to lead and to serve again. That tradition is as old as our republic itself and essential for the quality of leadership we need in order to protect our Constitution and our national security.

I am absolutely confident that Lloyd Austin will follow in that tradition. I am honored to introduce him to the committee and urge his swift confirmation.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Secretary Panetta. It is great to be with you again after all these years, and you have not lost a thing.

Okay. Mr. Austin, we have our first seven questions, and you know what they are. So you are ready to answer them, but answer them audibly, if you would?

Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

Mr. AUSTIN. I have.

Chairman INHOFE. Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines established for requested communications, including questions for the record in hearings?

Mr. AUSTIN. I will.

Chairman INHOFE. Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

Mr. AUSTIN. I will.

Chairman INHOFE. Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

Mr. AUSTIN. They will.

Chairman INHOFE. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request before this committee?

Mr. AUSTIN. I do.

Chairman INHOFE. Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee or to consult with the committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

Mr. AUSTIN. I do.

Chairman INHOFE. Have you assumed any duties or undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

Mr. AUSTIN. I have not.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you very much.

As Secretary Panetta clearly stated, there is not a time in the past that we have had more threats than we are facing today. Throughout my tenure as chairman, this committee has focused on the ensuring that the DOD has authorities and resources it needs to implement this, the National Defense Strategy.

This document is a document that means a lot to all of us here. It has been our blueprint that we have used since 2018. It was put together by six knowledgeable Democrats, six knowledgeable Republicans, and it has served as our blueprint. I would assume that you would consider and continue to do that. As the Secretary of Defense, second in the chain of command, you would be responsible and accountable to the President of the United States and to the American people for implementing this strategy.

I look forward to learning how you will drive military readiness for the strategic competition with China and Russia, which we have talked about at length here; how you will also handle some of the provocations from rogue nations like Iran and North Korea. Even worse is that our military's technology advantage has eroded. We were used to the old days when we had the best of everything. That that is not true anymore. We fell down a little bit.

I know that between the years of 2010 and 2015, we were dropping our defense in terms of dollars down by about 25 percent, while China was increasing theirs, Mr. Austin, by 83 percent. That is not acceptable. The Nation and the Department of Defense is going to tackle this problem head on if we hope to preserve and defend our way of life from those who would do harm to us.

If confirmed, you would have the honor of leading a team of Americans who represent everything that is noble and best for our Nation—our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, the Marines, and space guardians, our military families.

By the way, on the military families, we always hear from those who are a little less enthusiastic about a strong national defense that we spend more than Russia and China put together, and there is a reason for that. The reason for that is we care about the families. We care about housing. We care about—the largest single expense that we have in the military is for our families, our military families.

Now, in a Communist country, you do not have that. They just give you a gun and said, "Go out and shoot people." So that is what we are concerned about, and we will continue to do that.

Our many defense civil servants also sacrifice day in and day out for our national security and rarely get the credit that they deserve. The Department will require strong civilian leadership. For you to serve as the Secretary of Defense, Congress must provide an exception to the law that prohibits individuals from being appointed if they are within 7 years of their military service.

Last week, this committee held a hearing on civilian control of the armed services, which I think it was instructive. I have never been all that concerned about the 7 years, but others have. I hope

that you will share with the committee what actions you will take to ensure your tenure reflects and protects the principle of civilian control of the military if you are confirmed.

We look forward to hearing your views on these and other important issues.

Senator Reed?

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I join you in welcoming Lloyd Austin to today's hearing.

General, I want to thank you for your four decades of military service to our country, and I appreciate your willingness to return to public service, this time in a civilian capacity.

In addition, I want to welcome your wife, Charlene. I also want to recognize and thank former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, who spoke on your behalf, in addition to Senator Sullivan, for their introductions.

Today's hearing is also very different from previous Secretary of Defense nomination hearings. Due to recent security threats, the Acting Secretary of Defense has authorized the deployment of 25,000 National Guard troops to Washington, DC. I never thought I would see such a large display of U.S. military force in the streets of our country.

I thank the servicemembers and the other Federal agencies for ensuring that the U.S. Capitol and the inauguration is safe and secure. In addition, the world continues to be engulfed in a global pandemic that has caused hundreds of thousands of deaths in the United States and sickened millions more. This has not only affected the way we conduct our hearings, but it has become the paramount issue facing the new Administration, including the Department of Defense.

General Austin, you have a long and distinguished career. You have served at the highest echelons of the Army and capped your service as the commander of U.S. Central Command.

If confirmed as the next Secretary of Defense, you will face a daunting array of current and emerging security threats. U.S. strategic priorities have shifted in recent years, as reflected in the 2018 National Defense Strategy, to focus increasingly on the near-peer competition with China and Russia. At the same time, the Trump administration, through its disruptive behavior, has eroded faith in U.S. global leadership with adverse strategic consequences.

Indeed, our National Defense Strategy must be a component of an overall national security strategy that embraces all aspects of soft power as well as military power. As a former commander of United States Central Command, you have valuable experience to addressing security threats in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere in the CENTCOM area of operations. The incoming Biden administration faces an immediate challenge with respect to Iran's growing nuclear, ballistic missile, and proxy capabilities. The Department of Defense will play a key role in deterring these threats while supporting diplomatic efforts.

In Iraq and Syria, while the physical ISIS caliphate has been defeated, the underlying factors that gave rise to ISIS and al-Qaeda

remain largely unaddressed. Defending against transnational violent extremist groups will require continued vigilance.

In Afghanistan, our allies and partners need to be reassured that going forward, they will be consulted up front on any changes in United States Force posture. The incoming Administration will need to assess the conditions on the ground, including whether the Taliban is, in fact, living up to their commitments and what level of support are required to protect United States national security interests and invigorate a diplomatic solution.

In addition to these broad strategic challenges, as Secretary of Defense, you must also grapple with issues specific to the management of the Department. The fiscal year 2022 budget will be the first that is unconstrained by the Budget Control Act, and some view this as an opportunity to redirect the overall defense budget.

This year will mark an inflection point in how the Department prioritizes resources it needs to accomplish its missions. The Department must focus its efforts on critical technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, biotechnology, and cybersecurity while also emphasizing rapid delivery of advanced new weapon systems on timelines that keep pace with technological change.

The Department of Defense must partner with Congress to find ways to retire legacy systems without incurring too much risk operationally or economically. The Department also has management challenges that require investment in great people to manage the complexities of the Pentagon and its processes rather than an endless search for budget cuts and workforce reductions.

Ensuring robust funding for full-spectrum readiness, including additional home station training, flying hours, steaming days, depot maintenance, and installation sustainment, has been a high priority for this committee, and I expect it will be yours, too. The Department must also hold private housing companies and their defense chain of command accountable to ensure families live in the homes they deserve. Our men and women in uniform and the civilian workforce that supports them remain this committee's top concern, and they must be yours as well.

Recruiting and retaining a sufficiently sized, trained, and equipped military of the necessary quality of character and talent to meet national defense requirements is always a paramount goal of the Secretary of Defense and this committee. Successful recruiting ensuring the health of the force has been and will continue to be a challenge while we finish the national fight against COVID.

General Austin, as I have recounted in great detail, if confirmed, you will manage a Department coping with many extraordinarily difficult issues that will require strong civilian leadership to address these challenges and to reverse the erosion of civil-military relations over the past several years. However, in order to serve as the Secretary of Defense, Congress must provide an exception to the statutory requirement that prohibits individuals from being appointed if they are within 7 years of their military service.

Last week, this committee heard from expert witnesses on the state of civilian control in the Armed Forces. Some members expressed concern that providing an exception for you to serve as the Secretary of Defense, particularly so soon after Secretary Mattis, could harm civil-military relations. It is a valid concern.

But as our witnesses testified, it is possible to mitigate the effects if you demonstrate your commitment to empowering civilians in the Department. Further, we must also hear how you view the role of Secretary of Defense and how that position is different from your days of honorable service as a military officer.

This distinction is critical, as the Secretary of Defense is an inherently political position requiring a skill set for managing a vast bureaucracy while balancing personalities within the Department and across our Federal agencies. Relatedly, an effective Secretary must be transparent with Congress. Tensions often exist between the executive and legislative branches, regardless of political party. However, the Department must keep Congress fully informed on critical national security developments so that we can conduct congressional oversight.

General Austin, with these broad categories in mind, I hope you will candidly share what actions you will take to ensure your tenure reflects and protects the principle of civilian control of the military.

Finally, strengthening civil-military relations is not the sole responsibility of the Secretary of Defense. Congress has a role, too. This includes expeditiously confirming qualified civilian nominees to serve in the Pentagon. Furthermore, I believe Congress should revisit the headquarters reductions implemented over the past several years. While well intentioned, these budget cuts have sapped the Department of experience, expertise, and institutional knowledge, all of which degrades the Department's ability to oversee the critical policy issues that are integral for robust civilian oversight.

Again, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to hearing from our nominee.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Reed. Excellent, excellent statement.

With some Senators attending remotely, I want to let everyone know how we are going to run this thing. Since it is impossible to know exactly when our colleagues who will be joining via computer, we will not follow our standard early bird timing rule. Instead, we will handle the order of questions by seniority, alternating to each side, Democrat and Republican, until we have gone through everyone. Then we will see how much time we have left and what the wish is.

We will do the standard—instead of doing the standard 5 minutes, Senator Reed and I have agreed that 7-minute rounds might be more appropriate. I ask my colleagues on the computers to please keep an eye on the clock, which you should see on your screens, and we will try to adhere to those 7-minute rounds.

Finally, to allow for everyone to be heard, whether in the room or on a computer, I ask all colleagues to please mute your microphone when you are not speaking.

Mr. Austin, we will begin with your opening statement and be assured that the entirety of your written statement will be made a part of the record.

General Austin?

**STATEMENT OF LLOYD J. AUSTIN III TO BE SECRETARY OF
DEFENSE**

Mr. AUSTIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, members of this committee.

I am grateful for your time this afternoon, especially during these momentous days. It was apparent to me and to all Americans 2 weeks ago how seriously you take your duties to the Constitution, and I thank you for that commitment.

I know that you share my gratitude for the commitment of the men and women of the Department of Defense as well, who share your devotion to that founding document, our Constitution. Many of them are serving overseas. Some of them are serving just outside this room, and all of them are keeping us safe. We owe much to their selflessness and to that of their families.

I want to thank Senator Sullivan and Secretary Panetta for their kind words of introduction. I am truly grateful.

Of course, I want to thank my wonderful wife, Charlene, who, like today, has stood by my side for more than 40 years, guiding me, supporting me, and making me a better man.

I am also very grateful to President-Elect Biden for asking me to serve my country again. I value the strength of my relationship with him, and I am humbled by the trust and confidence that he has placed in me. I hope this hearing will earn me your trust.

Let me say at the outset that I understand and respect the reservations that some of you have expressed about having another recently retired general at the head of the Department of Defense. The safety and security of our democracy demands competent civilian control of our Armed Forces, the subordination of military power to the civil.

I spent my entire life committed to that principle. In war and in peace, I implemented the policies of civilians elected and appointed over me, leaders like Secretary Panetta. I know that being a member of the President's Cabinet, a political appointee, requires a different perspective and unique duties from a career in uniform.

I intend to surround myself with and empower experienced, capable civilian leaders who will enable healthy civil-military relations grounded in meaningful oversight. Indeed, I plan to include the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in top decision-making meetings, ensuring strategic and operational decisions are informed by policy.

I will rebalance collaboration and coordination between the Joint Staff and the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] staff to ensure civilian input is integrated at every level of the process, and I will make clear my expectation that the Pentagon work hand-in-glove with the State Department supporting the work of our diplomats.

Now I know that a large measure of civilian control of our military lies right here with this body. If you confirm me, I assure you that the Pentagon under my leadership will respect your oversight responsibilities, and we will be transparent with you. I will provide you my best counsel, and I will seek yours.

Just like you, I will take seriously the many challenges facing our country, the most immediate of which, in my view, is the pandemic. If confirmed, I will quickly review the Department's con-

tributions to coronavirus relief efforts, ensuring that we are doing everything that we can to help distribute vaccines across the country and to vaccinate our troops and preserve readiness.

We will also do everything we can for our military families. They, too, are educating kids at home and losing their jobs and trying to stock the pantry. I know this committee shares my view that we owe them our best efforts to lighten that load.

We also owe our people a working environment free of discrimination, hate, and harassment. If confirmed, I will fight hard to stamp out sexual assault and to rid our ranks of racists and extremists and to create a climate where everyone fit and willing has the opportunity to serve this country with dignity. The job of the Department of Defense is to keep America safe from our enemies, but we cannot do that if some of those enemies lie within our own ranks.

For those enemies and adversaries outside the ranks and around the world, we need resources to match strategy, and strategy matched to policy, and policy matched to the will of the American people. Globally, I understand that Asia must be the focus of our effort, and I see China in particular as a pacing challenge for the Department. I know I will need your help in tackling these problems and to give our men and women in uniform the tools that they need to fight and win.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, while I did not seek this job, I consider it an honor. If confirmed, I will carry out the mission of the Department of Defense always with the goal to deter war and ensure our Nation's security, and I will uphold the principle of civilian control of the military as intended. I would not be here asking for your support if I felt that I was unable or unwilling to question people with whom I once served in operations that I once led or too afraid to speak my mind to you or to the President.

I was a general and a soldier, and I am proud of that. But today, I appear before you as a citizen. The son of a postal worker and a homemaker from Thomasville, Georgia, and I am proud of that, too, and if you confirm me, I am prepared to serve now as a civilian, fully acknowledging the importance of this distinction.

I thank you again for consideration of my nomination and for your steadfast support of our men and women in uniform, our civilians, and their families, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lloyd Austin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LLOYD AUSTIN

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, Members of this Committee. I'm grateful for your time this afternoon, especially during these momentous days. It was apparent to me—and to all Americans two weeks ago—how seriously you take your duties to the constitution. I thank you for that steadfastness.

I know you share my gratitude for the steadfastness of the men and women of the Department of Defense as well, who share your devotion to that founding document.

Many of them are serving overseas. Some of them are just outside this room. All of them are keeping us safe.

We owe much to their selflessness and that of their families.

I want to thank Senator Sullivan and Secretary Panetta for their kind words of introduction. I personally owe much to their mentorship and support.

Of course, I thank my wonderful wife, Charlene, who—like today—has stood by my side for more than forty years ... guiding me, supporting me, making me a better man.

I am also grateful to President-elect Biden for asking me to serve my country again. I value the strength of my relationship with him, and I am humbled by the trust and confidence he has placed in me.

I hope this hearing will help me earn your trust.

Let me say at the outset that I understand and respect the misgivings some of you have expressed about having another recently retired general at the head of the Defense Department.

The safety and security of our democracy demands competent civilian control of our armed forces ... the subordination of military power to the civil.

I spent nearly my entire life committed to that principle. In war and in peace I implemented the policies of civilians elected and appointed over me ... leaders like Secretary Panetta.

I know that being a member of the president's cabinet—a political appointee—requires a different perspective and unique duties from a career in uniform.

So, if confirmed, you can expect me to empower my civilian staff. Indeed, I plan to include the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in top decision-making meetings ensuring strategic and operational decisions are informed by policy.

I will rebalance collaboration and coordination between the Joint Staff and the OSD staff to ensure civilian input is integrated at every level of the process.

I will make clear my expectation that the Pentagon work hand in glove with the State Department on all foreign engagements and activities.

Now, I also know that a large measure of civilian control of our military lies right here with this body.

If you confirm me, I can assure you the Pentagon under my leadership will respect your oversight responsibilities. We will be forthcoming and transparent.

I will provide you my best counsel, and I will seek yours.

Just like you, I will also take seriously the many challenges facing our country, the most immediate of which, in my view, is the pandemic.

If confirmed, I will quickly review the Department's contributions to coronavirus relief efforts, ensuring we are doing everything we can ... and then some ... to help distribute vaccines across the country and to vaccinate our troops and preserve readiness.

We'll also do everything we can for our military families as well. They, too, are educating kids at home, losing their jobs, trying to stock the pantry.

I know this committee shares my view that we owe them our best efforts to lighten that load.

We also owe our people a working environment free of discrimination, hate and harassment.

If confirmed, I will fight hard to stamp out sexual assault ... to rid our ranks of racists ... and to create a climate where everyone fit and willing has the opportunity to serve this country with pride and with dignity.

The Defense Department's job is to keep America safe from our enemies. But we can't do that if some of those enemies lie within our own ranks.

For those enemies and adversaries outside the ranks and around the world, we need resources matched to strategy, strategy matched to policy, and policy matched to the will of the American people.

Globally, I understand that Asia must be the focus of our effort, and I see China, in particular, as the pacing challenge for the Department.

If confirmed, I know I will need your help to tackle these problems ... and to give our men and women in uniform the tools they need to fight and win.

Thank you for the support this committee has always given our military and for the support I know you will continue to render.

Mr. Chairman, I did not seek this job. But I consider it an honor. I consider it my duty.

Throughout my life, subtly or directly, some people believed I wasn't quite good enough ... or maybe that I didn't possess the right qualities to fulfill such duty.

I figured out early on that a kid from rural Georgia was going to have to work a lot harder, learn a lot faster, and prepare a lot more to prove myself.

I wouldn't be here with you today if I wasn't ready to prove myself again.

I certainly wouldn't be here if I believed the last four years of my life left me too familiar with current operations to change course when needed ... too close to scrutinize people with whom I once served ... or too afraid to speak my mind to you or to the President.

You see, I am no longer a general. I am no longer a soldier.
 I am a citizen ... the son of a postal worker and a homemaker from Thomasville, Georgia.
 I am a civilian.
 If you confirm me, that's exactly how I will lead the Defense Department.
 Thank you.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, General Austin. Great statement. You heard my comments, General Austin, about the document, the National Defense Strategy. You are familiar with this. I am sure you have read it many times.

What do you think about its relevance today? Do you see changes that should be made in this, or what is your feeling today contemporarily about this statement?

Mr. AUSTIN. I think much of the document is absolutely on track for today's challenges, Mr. Chairman. As is the case with all strategies, if confirmed, one of the things that I would look to do is to work to update the strategy and work within the confines of the guidance and the policy issued by the current—the next Administration.

Chairman INHOFE. Yes, well, that is right, and the guidance also from this document I think is still relevant to date.

In this document, the previous two Secretaries of the Defense—Secretary Mattis, Secretary Esper—both agreed that that document, it prescribed that we probably need a 3 to 5 percent real growth in defense budget effectively in the coming years. Do you agree generally with that statement?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, Mr. Chairman, as I said in the opening statement, I believe that our resources need to match our strategy, and our strategy needs to match our policy.

Chairman INHOFE. Yes, I would assume that would be yes. Others are going to be asking about the civilian and military relations, I know that, but let me cover a couple of things that I think are important.

On the nuclear triad, a lot of people who are at different ideas on what we should do and the priorities we have in our defense system, that they try to whittle away at the nuclear triad, and we have always felt, and the Secretaries of Defense, that nuclear deterrence, do you agree with them that nuclear—their assessment that nuclear deterrence is the DOD's highest-priority mission?

Mr. AUSTIN. I do, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman INHOFE. Do you agree that the triad—the land, air, and sea-based nuclear delivery platforms are still necessary, even though we do hear a lot of arguments that two of the three would be adequate? What do you think?

Mr. AUSTIN. Mr. Chairman, I believe that the triad has served us well in the past, and I certainly believe that it will continue to do so going forward. I personally support the triad.

Chairman INHOFE. Good. We have kind of a forgotten continent for a long period of time in Africa. I can remember when Africa was in three different commands. It was in the United States Pacific Command (PACOM), the Central Command, and the United States European Command (EUCOM). We came along with AFRICOM, and I think things have really improved since that time. I think it is a critical theater for implementing this National Defense Strategy that we have.

We see China, all of our people talk about the South China Sea, about their building of the islands and all these things that are going on, but they forget that China has, for the first time, left their city limits to support a major objective on their behalf, and that is in Djibouti, and they go not just in Djibouti, but all throughout China as far south as the southern part of Tanzania, and so it is very active in that area.

I would ask you, right now, we have some 6,000 DOD personnel on the continent. I know there has been an effort, there was an effort in this last Administration to be reducing in some areas what our presence, what our resources, how they should be put out. My feeling was that we had inadequate resources to start with only 6,000 in the entire continent.

Do you have any thoughts that you have given to that in terms of the resources that we need to use in that part of the world?

Mr. AUSTIN. Mr. Chairman, Africa, like some other places in the world, has been one of those places where we have been able to gain good effect by—with a small amount of investment by helping to—helping our partners to increase their ability to defend their sovereign territory and to protect themselves.

Chairman INHOFE. That is excellent. We have to keep in mind that many of our closest allies are there right now, and if we should deteriorate our presence in any way, we would—I have a feeling they would do the same thing. So I appreciate that very much.

One last thing I want to touch on because it is a current issue. Ever since the International Court of Justice ruled way back in 1975, I believe it was, that we have—in Western Sahara, we have supported a referendum for self-determination.

Now the United States has done that ever since the 1970s. The U.N. has done that since the 1970s. The African Union has done that, and most all of the 52 nations of Africa have all stated that the Western Sahara should have a referendum for self-determination. What do you think?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, that is an issue that I certainly would want to take a closer look at, Mr. Chairman, before I gave you a detailed answer. But that is one of the things that I will look at, if confirmed, right away going into the position.

Chairman INHOFE. Yes, and I would like to have you keep in mind that they have been consistent for so many years, and so I would anticipate that your feelings would be the same.

Senator Reed?

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, General Austin.

One issue that is obvious is the discussion of the erosion of civilian control, participation, influence on the Department of Defense. That was highlighted by the National Defense Security document, which the chairman has displayed. But the suggestion there was it was not something that was happening in an instant, that it was taking place over years. Part of that, I believe, is the lack of competent civilian authorities in place.

There are many individuals, as I suggest in my statement that are acting. There are others who are civil servants who have been

pushed up into jobs that normally require confirmation, and there has been a lack of sometimes candidates for confirmation.

So I would ask you, if you are confirmed, will you do your utmost to ensure that every position, civilian position in the Department is filled, that we get nominees promptly? I know you have to work through the White House, and that other individuals will be put in positions where they are both skilled and qualified?

Mr. AUSTIN. Absolutely, Senator Reed. I will do everything I can to move as quickly as I can to move to fill those positions with experienced and competent, qualified civilians. I will need the help of this body to make sure that we are moving quickly.

Senator REED. Yes, I concur. This has to be a collaborative effort. I think in addition, too, with the civilian members, and as you suggest in your remarks, you have to ensure that there is a very appropriate working relationship with uniformed personnel, particularly on the Joint Staff. From your comments, I assume that will be one of your priorities, to make sure that and, indeed, that the civilians have a critical role in that process. Is that correct?

Mr. AUSTIN. It is absolutely correct, Senator Reed. I think it is imperative that the OSD staff maintain primacy in terms of crafting strategy and policy, and I think, you know, we will need the right civilians in key positions to help us do that.

We have already begun to move down that road. You have seen Colin Kahl nominated to be the Under Secretary for Policy, a very talented young man that will do well. You have seen Kath Hicks nominated to be the Deputy Secretary of Defense. So we are off to a good start, and we will continue to maintain momentum in filling those positions and making sure that we rebalance the workload between the Joint Staff and the Secretariat.

Senator REED. Thank you.

On another subject, the need for strength in alliances seems to be obvious, but something that you are going to have to take on immediately. I am thinking of the Pacific Defense Initiative, which the chairman was the principal author, and it is based on solidifying our relationships, both diplomatic and operationally, with our near partners in the Pacific—the Australians, the Japanese, and the South Koreans—and then building further with other Pacific nations.

I would presume and hope that you would see that as an important task also, building up our relationships and alliances, which, in many respects, has been neglected. Is that something that you see as important?

Mr. AUSTIN. I think it is critical, Senator Reed, and I also very much look forward to going out and refurbishing those alliances and making sure that we build additional capacity where possible. You can look when we are—when we do begin to travel again that that region will be one of my first stops.

Senator REED. Right, and the old saying, there is strength in numbers, and I think there is some truth to that. So as we build up our not just in a superficial way, but training together, conducting exercises together, integrating our intelligence, integrating our operations at sea, on land, and in the air, that, I think, it could be the best deterrent we could think of with respect to the aspirations of China, and I think you might concur.

Mr. AUSTIN. I agree.

Senator REED. One of the tasks you are going to have is as you are trying to deal with all these places around the world, you also have to transform the Department of Defense. As the chairman indicated, our technological advantage, which was, we thought, uncontested in the '50s, '60s, '70s, '80s, et cetera, is contested. In fact, there are suggestions that we might not be ahead in many places.

So you are going to have to think very seriously about how do we elevate science? How do we, more importantly, take our scientific developments, our prototypes, and get it to the field, to soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines in the field? If you have any comments on that, I would appreciate it.

Mr. AUSTIN. I certainly agree with you, Senator Reed that our acquisition system needs to be more agile and more responsive to the needs that you just mentioned. We need to get the capability down to the people who need it, the people who are going to use it, as quickly as possible.

I would also say that we need to develop the operational concepts that support those new capabilities to make sure that we continue to present a credible deterrent. But I absolutely agree that there is much to be done in terms of working with the acquisition process to make sure that it becomes more agile.

Senator REED. Well, thank you.

Now just as a final point, I think I have to respond to the challenge that the chairman gave you to reach your 61st wedding anniversary. Having been married for the first time at the age of 55, despite my best efforts, I can guarantee the chairman, I will not reach 61 years.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman INHOFE. I do not believe that.

Senator WICKER?

Senator WICKER. Senator Reed, you just do it one day at a time.

Senator REED. Thank you. That is good advice, Senator Wicker.

Senator WICKER. Mr. Austin, thank you for being with us today. Thank you for the conversation that we had several weeks ago over the phone, and thank you for your willingness to serve in the military and now to serve in a civilian capacity.

You are a West Point graduate. I pointed out to Senator Reed that I am wearing an Army tie today in your honor, but I suppose also in honor of Senator Reed and all the distinguished Army folks. I am an Air Force veteran myself, but I am also a former chair of the Seapower Subcommittee, and so today, I want to talk to you at the beginning about seapower.

The 30-year ship building plan was finally released just last month by the leadership in the Navy, and it calls for 405 manned ships by the year 2051. That is compared to a 355 ship requirement that we previously had and that we actually placed into the statute.

Have you read the 30-year ship building plan, Mr. Austin?

Mr. AUSTIN. I have not read the ship—the 30-year plan yet, Senator Wicker.

Senator WICKER. Are you familiar with the fact that the 30-year ship building plan calls for increasing our requirement? Actually,

it increases our requirement from 355 ships to 405 manned ships by the year 2051.

Mr. AUSTIN. I am familiar with that—with that fact.

Senator WICKER. Do you support that finding?

Mr. AUSTIN. I certainly—I would just say, Senator, our Navy is the most capable naval force on the face of the planet. It will remain so if I am confirmed and become Secretary of Defense.

I think that it is important that we maintain the capabilities that we will need to be relevant not only today, but relevant tomorrow. So I look forward to getting on the ground, if confirmed, and working with the leadership of the Navy to better understand the requirements and how we are going to support those requirements.

Also I look forward to working with this body to make sure that we have the right resources to support that requirement.

Senator WICKER. Well, that does bring me to a point that I need to make, and that is that within the Administration, it is not only the White House and it is not only DOD, but also OMB [Office of Management and Budget] is a mighty big gorilla sitting in the room there, and they force a lot of constraints upon us.

Let me just say to you that I hope you will soon become familiar with the ship building plan and be able to give us a more definite answer about the need for an increased Navy to do the things that we have to do. It calls for adding 82 new ships between 2022 and 2026 at a cost of \$147 billion.

Previously, that number was only 44 ships. So the new requirement, the new plan is 82 new ships in that short 4-year period, rather than 44 ships, and an extra \$45 billion over that timeframe. So rest assured that we need to have more conversations there.

The distinguished chairman mentioned China, the fact that their ambitions not only are in the Pacific, but also extend to Africa, and he named a few locations there. The DOD report to Congress on China recently said it is likely China will aim to develop a military by mid century that is equal to or, in some cases, superior to the United States military.

Do you agree with that assessment, Mr. Austin?

Mr. AUSTIN. I would agree. I would agree that that is their goal. My job, if confirmed as Secretary of Defense, is to make sure that we develop the capabilities, the plans, and the operational concepts to ensure that we maintain a competitive edge. So, while that may be their goal, I would, again, if I am confirmed, would intend to make sure that that never happens.

Senator WICKER. Well, it is my contention that the new ship building plan calling for 405 manned ships by the year 2051 and additional 82 new ships in the next 5 years is part and parcel to answering that challenge. What do you say to that, Mr. Austin?

Mr. AUSTIN. I would certainly say that we need to have the right kinds of capability to be able to counter the emerging threat. Again, I look forward to having that conversation with the Department of the Navy.

If that is the analysis that has been provided by the Navy, I have every reason to believe that it is accurate. But I really would like to have that conversation in more depth.

Senator WICKER. Let me quote another Army man, the distinguished Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Milley, who

said just last month, "Look, I am an Army guy, and I love the Army, but the fundamental defense of the United States and the ability to project power forward will always be for America naval and airspace power."

I would just commend to you that statement and suggest that the additional seapower is going to be necessary. I would also want you to comment, and I will just ask you, because we are time constrained, to comment about the idea of basing two additional destroyers at Rota, Spain, to be there to combat Russian aggression. But, Mr. Chairman, because I only have 2 seconds, I will take that for the record.

Thank you, Mr. Austin.

Mr. AUSTIN. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Wicker.

[The information referred to follows:]

Mr. AUSTIN. Ensuring that USEUCOM has the right capabilities to effectively deter and, if necessary, defeat Russian aggression will be one of my primary objectives as Secretary. If confirmed, I will thoroughly review force posture proposals such as stationing additional DDGs in Rota with that objective in mind.

Senator Shaheen?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Austin, thank you for being willing to be considered for this important post at this critical time in our Nation's history.

As you are probably aware, last week this committee received testimony from outside experts on the issue of the waiver that will be required for you to serve and the whole issue of civil-military relations. I know you addressed that briefly in your opening comments, and Senator Reed followed up with some specific questions. But one of the interesting things to me in that hearing last week was one of the people testifying talked about the concern that during Secretary Mattis' tenure that there was an over-deference to military views that were critical to shaping America's military policy or defense policy.

Can you talk about how you would respond to those concerns and what you think should be done to ensure that the balance continues, with the prominence being on civilian control of the military?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, thank you, Senator.

I believe that you need to have the right people in the right positions that can be in—that are in the decision-making process, and so I look to have a very experienced Under Secretary for Policy. I look to have a very experienced Deputy Secretary of Defense. My Chief of Staff will not—if I am confirmed will not be a military person, but yet a person that really understands strategy and policy and also has deep ties to the Hill, as well as to the White House.

So I think the people in the room and contributing to the decision-making, it makes all the difference in the world. So to answer your question, I will make sure that we staff the positions with the right people who have the right experiences and who are not afraid to provide their input. I will empower them to make sure that they have the flexibility to get the job done, to coordinate with the Joint Staff and coordinate with the other agencies to ensure that we have a policy—have significant policy input on every decision.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I appreciate that, especially the importance of the empowerment of those individuals.

When we talked shortly after your nomination was put forward, we talked about two of New Hampshire's military installations that we are very proud of, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, which is shared between New Hampshire and Maine, and also our 157th Air Refueling Wing at Pease National Guard, which was the first Air National Guard base to receive the new KC-46 refueling tanker.

There are two long-term concerns that I have about those installations. One is the shipyard optimization plan, as we look at the need to invest in our public shipyards in the future. That optimization plan is going to be critical to ensuring that the capacity is there not just at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, but our other public shipyards to support our naval fleet. I hope that you will remain committed to that plan and to moving forward with that plan as we look at the upcoming years.

Mr. AUSTIN. I will, Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. The other is the KC-46 and the continuing issues with getting that tanker online. As you know, the most recent one is the remote vision system, which still is not fixed in a way that allows those tankers to fly and do the refueling mission that is so critical.

Again, I would hope that you will stay on that issue with Boeing and make sure we get those planes right so that they can do the refueling that we are paying for them to do.

Mr. AUSTIN. I will absolutely stay on this—on this issue. I think it is critical. It is a critical component of our overall force, and so I think it is important that we continue to press and get this capability to where it needs to be.

Senator SHAHEEN. Great, and I hope you will come up to New Hampshire and visit both of those installations at some point in your tenure, if confirmed.

I would like to ask you about Afghanistan next because as we look at where we are in Afghanistan, the treaty or the agreement—I do not know what we want to call it because, clearly, the Taliban is not complying with what had been announced as concessions that were made as part of that agreement. Also, the failure of that agreement to take into consideration the role of women and minorities in Afghanistan that have been so important as they have written a new constitution.

As we look at ending conflict there, one of the things we know from the data is that when women are at the table in negotiations, that there is a 35 percent better chance that those peace agreements will last 15 years or longer. So this is not just for the optics, it looks great to have women at the table. It is about how do we ensure that those negotiations are long lasting?

I wonder if you can talk about what you would like to see at this point in Afghanistan as we think about how do we withdraw there in a way that leaves a country that enshrines some of the changes that have been made to support a new constitution and all of the effort that has been put in there by the United States and so many other countries in the world.

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, Senator, I certainly would like to see this conflict end with a negotiated settlement, and I think we are going to

make every effort that we can to ensure that that happens. I would also like to say up front I am truly grateful for the sacrifices of the thousands of men and women that have gone through Afghanistan and given so much, sacrificed so much. To your point, their work has made a difference.

But I think this conflict needs to come to an end, and we need to see an agreement reached, and in accordance with what the President-Elect wants to see, I think we want to see an Afghanistan in the future that does not present a threat to America. So a focus on some kind of terrorism issues, I think, in the future I think would be helpful.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Shaheen and via Webex, Senator Fischer.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, General Austin.

This committee has consistently heard testimony, including from every United States Strategic Command (STRATCOM) commander who has appeared before this committee since I have been a member, recommending against making unilateral reductions to our nuclear forces. Do you agree that making unilateral reductions is unwise?

Mr. AUSTIN. Senator, I am having a tough time hearing you.

Chairman INHOFE. Yes, the volume seems not to be high enough. If anyone knows how to adjust that, this is a good time to do it.

Senator FISCHER. Let me see if I do.

Chairman INHOFE. That sounds better.

Senator FISCHER. Do you hear me okay?

Chairman INHOFE. Yes.

Senator FISCHER. Okay. I was asking, sir, about making unilateral reductions to our nuclear forces. Do you agree that making these reductions unilaterally is unwise?

Mr. AUSTIN. I think that we should—I look forward to getting on-board, if confirmed, and having an ability to kind of look under the hood and see exactly what we are doing with our nuclear forces. So once I have had a chance to do that, Senator, I would love to come back and discuss it with you.

Senator FISCHER. In your answer to some questions that were sent over to you, you said that—you said, “I believe it is in the national security interests of the United States and its allies and partners to pursue formal, verifiable arms control agreements that reduce the nuclear threats from Russia and China.” Is that correct?

Mr. AUSTIN. That is correct, Senator.

Senator FISCHER. So reductions should be made through negotiated, verifiable agreements, not unilaterally. Is that right?

Mr. AUSTIN. That is correct.

Senator FISCHER. Okay. Thank you, sir.

Another fact that has been consistently emphasized by civilian officials and military leaders in both the Obama and Trump administrations is that nuclear modernization cannot be delayed any further. Speaking in 2016, President Obama’s Secretary of Defense Ash Carter put it in the following way, “The fact is most of our nuclear weapon delivery systems have already been extended decades beyond their original expected service lives, so it is not a choice be-

tween replacing these platforms or keeping them. It is really a choice between replacing them or losing them. That would mean losing confidence in our ability to deter, which we cannot afford in today's volatile security environment."

More recently, Admiral Richard, the current STRATCOM commander, in his posture statement last year testified that, "Many of the modernization and sustainment efforts necessary to ensure the deterrent's viability have zero schedule margin and are late-to-need." He went on to state, "We cannot afford more delays and uncertainty in delivering capabilities and must maintain a focus on revitalizing our nuclear forces and the associated infrastructure."

General, is this also your understanding of the modernization schedule?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, I again—I misunderstood your first part, the first part of the question there, when you were—when you started out. What I wanted to tell you was I really look forward to getting into the details of the nuclear modernization program, if confirmed. You know, I really would like to be able to look at the details of exactly what we are choosing to invest in and the timelines associated with that, and I would love to come back to you and discuss that with you.

Senator FISCHER. I would have your assurance, though, that you would, of course, be visiting with the current STRATCOM combatant commander, as well as previous ones, about the need to make sure that we have these platforms that we need and also—

Mr. AUSTIN. That will be a—

Senator FISCHER. Go ahead.

Mr. AUSTIN. That will be a top priority, Senator.

Senator FISCHER. I guess I am kind of surprised by your answer, General. When the chairman asked you about the triad, specifically about maintaining an effective nuclear triad of land, air, and sea-based platforms, I thought your answer was, yes, we have to maintain that effective nuclear triad. Is that correct?

Mr. AUSTIN. That is correct, Senator.

Senator FISCHER. I realize that you do have to review where we currently are in modernization, but I would think having an understanding that every Administration and every STRATCOM commander and also our Secretaries of Defense have been adamant that we cannot fall behind on this, your answer that you would have to get back on me is somewhat surprising. I understand it is a complicated topic, but it is a 60-year-old foundational concept that we have here.

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, Senator, and I think—I think that we are in agreement that this is a priority, this needs to remain a priority. What I was just conveying was the specific timelines of which pieces are being resourced at what rate, those things I would really like to get into details and have a further discussion with you on.

But there is no question that I consider this to be a priority, and it will remain a priority. I look forward to getting with the STRATCOM commander and having that discussion in detail.

Senator FISCHER. Well, thank you. I hope also, if you are confirmed, you will be a strong advocate for the National Nuclear Security Administration being able to receive sufficient funding so that they can meet the Department of Defense's needs.

Mr. AUSTIN. I will be.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Fischer.

Now via Webex, Senator Gillibrand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Austin, President-Elect Biden made overturning President Trump's ban on open transgender military service a day one priority. Can you confirm your commitment and tell the committee how you plan to reinstate open service?

Mr. AUSTIN. I support the President's plan or plan to overturn the ban. I truly believe, Senator, that as I said in my opening statement, that if you are fit and you are qualified to serve and you can maintain the standards, you should be allowed to serve. You can expect that I will support that throughout.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Austin.

When we met together, we talked at length about the scourge of military sexual assault in the military. We talked about how this has been an issue for decades, and in fact, we talked about all the efforts that the Department of Defense has made over at least the last decade that I have been on the Armed Services Committee to try to eradicate it.

Every Secretary of Defense from the last 25 years has said there is a zero tolerance for sexual assault in the military. But every time they say there is zero tolerance, we look at the facts, we look at the evidence, we look at how many sexual assaults are committed, how many go to trial, how many end in conviction, and we do not seem to improve at all. In fact, last year, the Department of Defense announced a record number of sexual assaults reported by or against servicemembers and the lowest conviction rate for their assailants on record.

In your opinion, does this reflect good order and discipline within the military? Does this reflect enhanced military readiness?

Mr. AUSTIN. Senator, I take the issue of sexual assault seriously and personally. To your point, Senator, I think we have put a lot of effort into this, and I am grateful for all of the effort that you have personally put into this and this committee has put into this, but we have not gotten better. We have to get better, and we will get better.

We have to go after the culture. We have to go after the climate. This is a leadership issue. It is a readiness issue, and it starts on the top, and we have got to work from the bottom as well, simultaneously.

Senator GILLIBRAND. So, therefore, is your answer, yes, that it does not reflect good order and discipline and does not reflect the readiness that you would like your service to have?

Mr. AUSTIN. That is correct, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Furthermore, the most recent Pentagon survey on the topic found that 64 percent of sexual assault survivors who reported their crime received some form of retaliation for reporting that crime, often from the exact chain of command that is supposed to protect them. This number is statistically unchanged from 2016.

Does this suggest to you adequate progress on what the top brass has promised to do year after year? Do you believe that this is sufficient progress?

Mr. AUSTIN. I absolutely do not believe that it is progress, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Well, given the total lack of progress or accountability within the military justice system, do you believe that a new approach must be taken? Because as we discussed the recent events at Fort Hood, a new approach is clearly warranted. What is your view on that?

Mr. AUSTIN. I certainly believe that we need to do better, a lot of things better in terms of investigation and prosecutions, and I think we have to look at this holistically. I know that you know that the President-Elect has committed to standing up a 90-day commission to really look at this soup to nuts. I look forward to the read-out of that commission, but I will not wait for 90 days to get after this.

As I indicated, this starts with me, and you can count on me getting after this on day one.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Well, to be honest, President-Elect Biden said much more than that. He promised much more than a commission. He said, in fact, when asked directly by Protect Our Defenders' Nancy Parrish if he would support "moving the military justice system into the 21st century by allowing military prosecutors to make prosecution decisions for nonmilitary crimes—serious felonies like rape, murder, and child abuse," and that President-Elect Biden in response said, "Yes, yes, yes."

So do you share President-Elect Biden's commitment to move prosecutorial decisions outside the chain of command and giving that decision to trained military prosecutors?

Mr. AUSTIN. I would like—if confirmed, I would like to work with the chain of command and very rapidly assess what things that there are that need to be—that need to be fixed or addressed. I would like to make those recommendations and provide those assessments to the President-Elect.

Senator GILLIBRAND. But you do agree that we cannot keep doing the same thing that we have been doing for the past decade?

Mr. AUSTIN. I absolutely agree with that, Senator. I absolutely agree with that.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Do I have your commitment to be relentless on this issue until we can end the scourge of sexual violence in the military?

Mr. AUSTIN. You have my commitment.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay. I would now like to move to civil-military relations.

Mr. Austin, scholars rightly argue that the Secretary of Defense plays a critical role in maintaining balanced civilian-military relations by explaining the military's activities to the public. Secretary Mattis, another recently retired general who required a waiver to serve, did not embrace this role. According to Bob Woodward's book *Fear*, Mattis grew so tired of being asked to appear on Sunday shows that he threatened to send Sean Spicer to Afghanistan.

Mr. Austin, can you commit to following in the footsteps of your predecessors and regularly appearing on TV to explain to Ameri-

cans where the Administration has asked servicemembers to risk their lives and why?

Mr. AUSTIN. I fully understand and appreciate the role that the Secretary of Defense has in communicating with the American public, Senator. You have my commitment that I will establish a good relationship with the media and provide them the access and the information required to do their job of reporting out to the American people.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Austin.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

Senator Cotton?

Senator COTTON. Congratulations, General Austin, on your nomination, and thank you for your appearance today, especially for your four decades of military service.

Unfortunately, I must announce that I oppose the waiver of the 7-year cooling-off period. My decision reflects not at all on you personally or your record, which I respect. Rather, I believe Congress should no longer grant such waivers at all.

I supported the waiver for General Mattis with reservations 4 years ago, which I quickly came to view as a mistake and I have since regretted. For that matter, upon further reading of the historical record, I now believe the waiver for General Marshall in 1950 was also a mistake. Under no foreseeable circumstances can I imagine supporting such a waiver again.

Again, General Austin, my reasons for this decision are distinct and separate from your nomination. Put simply, my reasons are the same reasons we have a cooling-off period for recently retired generals in the first place. Some of those reasons are simply effect, not something that you can address or about which you can reassure. Others, you can give reassurance, and I will give you that opportunity in a moment.

Among those concerns I have that I do not think can be addressed are the following. First, the perception that these waivers are now routine, not extraordinary. Senator Reed said in 2017 that he would not support another waiver, and they should happen "once in a generation." No matter what we say, though, if we approve two waivers in just 4 years, our actions will speak louder than our words.

Second, the perception among flag officers that a four-star billet is not a career capstone. Some generals and admirals may begin to think if they play their cards right, they, too, can become a Secretary in just a few years. I do not think that is good for the force or for the country.

Three, the perception among the American people that the military expertise of our general officers is the same as national security expertise more broadly and that the latter resides chiefly in the military, which I also believe is unhealthy for our democracy.

Four, the perception of potential Army favoritism. As a 41-year officer in the Army, many observers may disbelieve that you can hang up the Army green, rightly or wrongly. If you make the right decision for the Army over the other services, then those services' advocates may say it is because of favoritism. Make the correct decision for another service against the Army, and the Army's advo-

cates will say you are protecting your flank against such charges of favoritism. Neither one of those may be true in the case, but I believe it is unavoidable.

Those concerns alone are weighty and enough for me to oppose this waiver, as I should have done 4 years ago. But there are still more reasons behind the cooling-off period. As I said, though, you can give reassurances about some of these concerns, and I want to give you the opportunity to do that.

First, Secretary of Defense is not a partisan job, but it is very much a political job. Bob Gates is a good example. He served in a Republican and Democratic Administration with great political skill. We, of course, expect our generals, like you and General Mattis, to be apolitical, but our troops deserve a Secretary with the political skills and willingness to fight for them, whether within the Pentagon against its bureaucracy, within the Cabinet in fights over policy and budgetary resources, or against parochial Members of Congress.

So, General Austin, what can you say to address this concern? If, for instance, John Kerry wants to sacrifice our force posture on China's periphery in return for ephemeral promises from China to reduce emissions in 2070? Or Jennifer Granholm wants to rob the nuclear security budget to fund pie-in-the-sky green energy programs? Or simply if the Office of Management and Budget wants to cut the military's budget, how would you manage such inherently political disputes?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, certainly in terms of providing resources for the military, my goal is to—my job is to defend this country, if I am confirmed as the Secretary of Defense. I believe that we need to have the adequate resources to be able to do that.

In order to help me work the issues and make my points throughout the interagency, number one, I will develop great relationships with my partners in State and OMB and other places. Number two, I will hire the right people to be on my staff to make sure that they are working with me and crafting the right language to be able to be successful in this dialogue.

Senator COTTON. Thank you, General. If confirmed, I do urge you to be a forceful political advocate for the Department and its interests, both inside the Cabinet and with the Congress as well.

A second concern I would like you to address is that the Secretary also holds a public office. Bob Gates routinely held on-camera press briefings about major decisions, new policies, public controversies, and so forth. Those have been almost nonexistent for the last 4 years.

General Austin, if confirmed, will you commit to hold regular, on-camera press briefings?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

Senator COTTON. Will you also commit to appear on television programs to explain the key issues of the day, as Senator Gillibrand raised?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

A third and final concern I want you to address is that a recently retired general is apt to bring with him much of his former military

staff, perhaps re-creating his last command as a kind of supreme combatant command, also likely to rely too much on the Joint Staff.

General Austin, could you please discuss, if confirmed, how many of your former military staff from your various senior commands you plan to hire and how you will balance the Joint Staff with civilian appointees, the services, and the combatant commands?

Mr. AUSTIN. The key billets for my staff, all of those positions are being—we are looking at filling all those positions, if I am confirmed, with experienced senior civilians that, again, I will empower to be able to get their job done.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

Again, General Austin, my concerns about these waivers do not bear at all on your nomination or your record of service to our Nation, for which I have the highest regard. I thank you again for answering the call of duty to your country.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Cotton.

Senator Blumenthal?

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

General Austin, Mr. Austin, thank you for being here today. Thank you for your extraordinary career of service, which I deeply respect and admire.

My opposition to the waiver is not personal. It is a matter of principle, and I want to move on to the merits of the policy issues that will confront you, if confirmed. In my view, you have expressed clearly and cogently your commitment to strengthening civilian control over the military, which you would implement if confirmed.

First, I have been deeply alarmed, as have been many of my colleagues, by the rise of white supremacists and extremist ideology in the military. You and I have discussed it. The latest signs are, in fact, that two National Guard members have been removed from their duties regarding the inaugural because of their potential links to extremist sentiments or organizations.

Last week, I led 13 of my colleagues in a letter to the Department of Defense Inspector General asking for an immediate and intensive investigation of the prevalence of white supremacy and extremist ideology. I am asking for your commitment that you will cooperate with and support that investigation. Shortly after our letter, the Department of Defense indicated it was going to do an evaluation of this issue, but I want an intensive investigation and action to counter it. I look forward, hopefully, to working with you in countering and combating this very important threat.

Mr. AUSTIN. I certainly look forward to working with you on this, Senator. I think this is critical. I would share a story with you from my past where when I was a lieutenant colonel working in probably the finest, one of the finest organizations in the Army—the 82nd Airborne Division—we woke up one day and discovered that we had extremist elements in our ranks, and they did bad things that we certainly held them accountable for.

But we discovered that the signs for that activity were there all along. We just did not know what to look for or what to pay attention to, but we learned from that. I think this is one of those things that is important to our military to make sure that we keep a handle on, to make sure our leaders are doing the right things. They

are taking care of their troops. They understand, they know their troops.

We can never take our hands off the wheel on this. This has no place in the military of the United States of America.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you very much. I really appreciate that answer.

You mentioned in your testimony the importance of the Chinese threat, the need to focus on it. But the most recent attack on our country was by Russia, which, for months, literally intruded, interfered, and attacked our Nation in cyberspace. In part because, as General Nakasone testified to us, our adversaries do not fear us—that is exactly what he said—in the cyber domain.

I would like to ask you to commit to conducting a top-down review of our cyber operations, including DOD's posture and structure, and to making our adversaries pay a price when they attack us, as the Russians did, through SolarWinds.

Mr. AUSTIN. You have my commitment that I will conduct that review. I think that there is a review ongoing now to really ascertain what transpired. I will join that, if confirmed, in stride. I really look forward to understanding with clarity what really happened.

I truly believe that, well, the FBI and the NSA have given Russia credit for this. They have attributed this activity to Russia. If that is the case, I think Russia should be held accountable. That is my personal belief.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Environmental action and climate change are more important than ever. I know the President-Elect is going to focus on it. As you and I have discussed in our meeting, the Department of Defense has an immense role to play. I welcome your comments on PFAS and the increasing resilience of our military installations.

I would like to work with you on a total program or plan for the Department of Defense beyond the magnitude of what is done now, and I know you have indicated your interest in it. So I am not going to ask questions about it, but I do think that the use and procurement of clean energy, the energy efficiency steps that DOD can take will not only save dollars, it will save energy and environmental values and provide leadership for the whole world.

I want to focus on military sexual assault, which my colleague Senator Gillibrand did so well before, and say that I am working on legislation that would create liability for perpetrators and for the Department of Defense for sexual misconduct in among servicemembers so that the survivors would have a right of action. They would be empowered to take action.

Will you support that kind of legislation, sir?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, I certainly look forward to reviewing what is in the legislation, Senator, and would love to have that discussion with you once I have had the ability to do that. I just want to take a moment to thank both you and Senator Gillibrand for the tremendous work, especially Senator Gillibrand, for the work that you have both done to counter sexual assault in our ranks. If confirmed, I look forward to working with both of you on this issue.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I appreciate that point. Let me just say I welcome and appreciate your focus in your written remarks in an-

swers to specific questions on the need to focus on our suppliers, our supply chain, our workforce, our defense industrial base, which are very important to Connecticut, where we are the submarine capital of the world at Electric Boat and where a trained workforce is especially important, but the supply chain equally so.

I would like you to review, because I am out of time, legislation that I proposed that would give the Mayor of the District of Columbia the same powers that Governors have over the National Guard. Because a lot of the very unfortunate lack of planning and coordination between Federal and local agencies that has been on display over recent months, in my view, is attributable to the lack of that power on the part of, in effect, locally empowered officials here.

Thank you.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator Ernst?

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much, General, for being here today. We certainly appreciate your commitment and your service to our great nation, and thank you for stepping forward with this nomination.

I just want to briefly touch upon the issue of sexual harassment, sexual assault, as Senator Gillibrand and Senator Blumenthal just did. We had a conversation about this last week. Thank you very much for that. But part of that Fort Hood report that came forward stated that the military readiness requirement superseded the need to protect our servicemembers.

What are your feelings as to that statement, and then how do we move forward and correct that?

Mr. AUSTIN. Senator, I earnestly—I honestly do not believe that these two issues are mutually exclusive. We absolutely have to take care of the men and women that are in our ranks. A failure to do so—I mean, we are about people in the military. We have the greatest, the best equipment in the world, and I get that. But this is about people.

If we do not take care of our people, it is really, really tough to do the job at hand, and that is to defend this country. I do not see these two issues as being at odds with each other. I think we have to do both, and we have to do them both well.

Senator ERNST. I truly appreciate that. I fully agree. Our military readiness does not have to suffer because of sexual harassment. We can take care of that issue and also still be the best fighting force in the world. So I appreciate your stance there.

I today had such a great honor. I retired from the Iowa Army National Guard in 2015, and we have a number of those tremendous men and women serving right outside our doors today. It was my honor to go out in front of the Capitol and re-enlist about 15 of our Iowa Army National Guardsmen, a great honor for me.

But the importance of our National Guard has really been on display the last year or so, as we have seen numerous trips deployed in support of fighting forest fires in California, or deployments and mobilizations supporting COVID-19 activities, whether it is food distribution to food banks, making sure that vaccines were distributed to our communities. We have seen tens of thousands of our soldiers and airmen mobilized. They were there. They responded, and they did it quite quickly.

I will emphasize that point again, that the National Guard, they mobilized, and they were there quickly, even beyond the capacity of their Active counterparts. So whether it was working for FEMA, helping those local health clinics, you know, distributing food, as I said, our National Guard members stepped up. Again, today we witness them out on our Capitol Mall keeping our Nation safe so that we here in Congress can do our duties.

So no matter what happens, whether it is response to riots or violence or other types of activities, they are mobilizing for us. So what we have learned over the last year is that they do come to us quickly in response to these domestic missions.

Now what further changes or reforms could be made to make sure that our National Guard are treated equally because of their important role for our United States, but treated equally with their Active Duty counterparts when it comes to training, when it comes to equipment, when it comes to readiness? What can we do to make sure that they are on par with their Active Duty counterparts?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, there are, as you know, being a—having been a Guard member for quite some time, there are some challenges in terms of the amount of days that you have to actually conduct that training. But quite frankly, over the last two decades, we have seen our great Guard members work shoulder to shoulder in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, and we have seen a difference in the quality of equipment early on. I think we have closed that gap now.

I think we are doing better. There is more that we can do. But we are going to have to continue to work through these challenges. There are no easy fixes, but this is one thing that I will work with the services on to make sure that we are giving our Guard the very best, finest of equipment. We are giving them good-quality training opportunities, and we are recognizing them for the great work that they are doing.

Senator ERNST. No, I thank you for that answer. They mean a lot to us in defense of our country and certainly short-notice mobilizations, especially as we see right here in Washington, DC, today.

So last issue because I know that we are running short on time, you and I did speak briefly about defense spending and the audit of our Pentagon and DOD. So we know that our defense budget has grown significantly to address many threats—Russia and China, as well as persistent threat coming from Iran, as well as a number of much smaller terrorist groups around the world. So the potential for defense spending that is wasteful has also grown and expanded, and it is used on lower-priority or even obsolete programs.

So, if confirmed, how will you lead the budget reviews to reform the Pentagon, and do you see it as a possibility to make sure that the Department of Defense does obtain a clean audit?

Mr. AUSTIN. That will continue to be our goal. As you and I talked, we have made some progress, as I understand it. I have been away from the process for a while, but there is more to be done. You have my commitment that we will lean into this and continue to push to make sure that we can get that clean audit in the not-too-distant future.

Senator ERNST. Thank you very much, General. My time has expired. Again, thank you for stepping forward and looking to serve our Nation again in this capacity.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Ernst.

Now via Webex, Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Austin, it was good to have the chance to talk with you a little while ago. I ask all nominees before any of the committees that I sit on the following two questions as part of my responsibility to make sure that nominees are fit for the appointment to which they are nominated. So I will ask you the following questions.

Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

Mr. AUSTIN. No.

Senator HIRONO. Have you ever faced discipline or entered into a settlement relating to this kind of conduct?

Mr. AUSTIN. No.

Senator HIRONO. I want to acknowledge my agreement with the questions asked—some of the questions asked by my colleague Senator Blumenthal and your commitment that you will be—you will counter any white supremacists or extremists within the ranks of the military. I think that is really important. Also the questions he asked relating to how important it is to make sure that we are safe from cyber attacks because these cyber systems are what the military communications very much depend on.

By the questions that were asked by several of my colleagues, including Senators Blumenthal and Gillibrand, a number of us are very concerned about the continuing scourge of sexual assault and harassment and retaliation in our military. It is very clear that the reforms that the Department of Defense has instituted are not nearly good enough, and much more action is needed.

I want to express to you last week a very tragic thing happened. Selena Roth, a 25-year-old Army veteran and military wife, was found dead in military housing at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. A soldier is in custody, and a homicide investigation is ongoing. My heart goes out to Selena's family. Violent acts against women within our military community continue to occur at an alarming rate, and I am committed to ensuring—to making sure that these perpetrators are held accountable.

You noted in your statement that you will fight sexual assault and harassment in the military, including, I hope, that you will look at the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), which I support, which Senator Gillibrand has been a leader on, and changing the UCMJ to remove the decision relating to prosecution of these kind of attacks outside of the chain of command. I hope you will review that very carefully because all of your predecessors have not supported that kind of a change.

I also want to mention that I have introduced the I am Vanessa Guillen Act. This act provides for the creation of a standalone punitive article for sexual harassment. If confirmed, would you support the creation of a standalone punitive article of sexual harassment to be included in the Uniform Code of Military Justice?

Mr. AUSTIN. Senator, any time we change the Uniform Code of Military Justice, I would want to approach that with great delib-

eration. But I would commit to you that I would certainly want to take this on and look at it with the right experts to make sure that we achieve the right effects with doing something like that.

But I would certainly want to make sure I get the right experts on hand to really drill into this.

Senator HIRONO. Well, sexual harassment can be subsumed under other charges, but it is not a standalone charge. I think it is very important, considering that sexual harassment occurs at an alarming rate in the military. So this is not—and I would hope that this is not something that requires a great deal of thinking because, as I said, we can already charge someone under other articles for sexual harassment.

So when a servicemember is sexually assaulted, they are given the option of either making a restricted or unrestricted report, and the I am Vanessa Guillen Act would allow victims of sexual harassment to also make restricted reports, allowing them to remain anonymous within their chain of command while still receiving the support services that they should have.

Would you support the creation of making that so, for victims of sexual harassment to be able to make a restricted report?

Mr. AUSTIN. I do not think I heard the end of the question there, Senator. Would you remind repeating the last piece of that?

Senator HIRONO. Yes. Would you allow victims of sexual harassment to have the same options that victims of sexual assault have in making a restricted report?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

I want to turn to the importance of training areas for the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility. Admiral Davidson, who is the commander of INDOPACOM, talked recently about the importance of joint, integrated training in this AOR [area of responsibility]. Admiral Davidson specifically mentioned the vital importance of both the Pacific Military Range Facility, or PMRF, on Kauai and the Army training areas, including Pohakuloa Training Range on the Big Island.

With Navy, Air Force, and Army leases all up for renewal in 2029, which is really right around the corner, it is incumbent on DOD to engage with State authorities and the local stakeholders like the Native Hawaii community early, often, and openly. Having a clear and transparent process is very critical to the renewal of these leases, which, needless to say, is critical for the military's presence in Hawaii.

What are your thoughts on the value of realistic joint training with our coalition partners in the region and elsewhere?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, certainly the value of conducting joint training with our coalition partners, I mean, it is invaluable. It is we always work better as a team. I think it ought to be effective as a team. You have to train to do that day in and day out, and so—

Senator HIRONO. So training is—I am sorry. I am running out of time. I just want to make sure that I have your commitment that you will have an open dialogue with the community with regard to these really important training facilities in the State of Hawaii?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

I do have some other questions—

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO.—but I believe I am out of time. I will submit them for the record.

Thank you.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Senator Rounds?

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, first of all, I just want to thank you and your wife and your family for serving our Nation in uniform because you did it with honor, and you did it for 41 years. I just want to say thank you for that, sir.

General, you and I have had the opportunity to speak now on several different occasions, and I have appreciated your answers to my questions with regard to the waiver. I truly do believe that the waiver was there for a reason, but I also think that the President-Elect does have—I think the tie goes to the President. In this particular case, I believe that he has nominated you because he believes that you are the right person at the right time.

I have no misgivings whatsoever about your capabilities and your competencies. I think in this particular case, it is my intent to support the waiver so that you can have your—the presentation of you before the Senate for confirmation.

I think part of the reason that I feel this way is because of the conversations that you and I had, and I want to go through them a little bit because, first of all, with regard to the difference between being the Secretary of Defense and being a member of the Joint Chiefs, there is a true difference between the two, the role of the two. Can you share a little bit your understanding of the differences in the role and yet, at the same time, the real need for both to be expressed and your plans with regard to bringing in, as you indicated in your opening remarks, additional qualified civilians into those top areas?

Mr. AUSTIN. So I think the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is required to give his best military advice to the President and to the Secretary routinely, and it is military advice. The Secretary has a much broader scope. He has a lot more to take into consideration. He is focused on strategy and policy, and he understands he is working within the guidelines provided by his boss, the President of the United States.

So there is an enormous difference, and I think one of the key enablers here, as I have said before, is to make sure that we have the right experts, the right professionals onboard working with me day in and day out to craft that strategy and develop that policy. But the Secretary has a much broader scope, and he is not focused on giving the same type of advice that the Chairman would provide.

I have seen this done right a number of times. All the Secretaries, of course, get it right. But the two that come to mind more than anyone else for me, when I was a three-star serving as the director of the Joint Staff, Secretary Bob Gates was the Secretary of Defense, an absolute master at making sure that he outlined roles and responsibilities and swim lanes, designated swim lanes for the Joint Staff and the OSD staff.

Later, you know, I served in the Pentagon as a four-staff as a Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, and I had a chance to work with Secretary Panetta, who, once again, was a master at making sure that those roles remained separate and that he provided the right kind of advice to the President of the United States. While he worked arm-in-arm with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, they did not provide the same kind of perspective.

I fully believe that I understand the difference, and I look forward to working with the Chairman. But I have no desire to be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and so, if confirmed, we will make sure that those roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you.

We also had a chance to talk a little bit about cyber and about the work that we have done in the last couple of years with regard to cyber and the defense of our cyber operations. It used to be you had air, land, and sea to worry about. Now we clearly have space, and we have cyberspace. A lot of our adversaries have decided to take the shortcut, and they are trying to impact all of the other domains using cyber.

In the last couple of years, particularly with regard to the 2018 DOD Cyber Strategy, we have decided to move forward, and we have a “defend forward” policy. You have indicated your support, or at least you have seen it, you have observed it, and so forth. Can you give me very briefly your thoughts about our cyber and the need to continue to make strides and to allow for offensive cyber operations to continue?

Mr. AUSTIN. I think that is important. I think having an offensive capability that we are able to use I think is really important, and so I applaud the efforts that have been made in the past. Once again, I have been away from it for a bit, but I really look forward to kind of getting back, getting under the hood, understanding how the—how the—how the processes work now to ensure coordination across the board, across the agencies.

In this endeavor, speed matters, and so anything that we can do to facilitate the work of the operators I think is goodness, but we have got to make sure we are doing it in the right way.

Senator ROUNDS. We will continue to remind you about the need for speed on that, if at all necessary, and I do not think it will be.

Finally, General, Secretary Mattis implemented a Close Combat Lethality Task Force in 2018. This is an organization dedicated to providing resources to the forces who have accounted historically for nearly 90 percent of the casualties, yet constitute only 4 percent of the force and receive only 1 percent of the institutional investments.

I am concerned with how this task force has appeared to have lost its direct report, this relationship with the Secretary. It appears to have gotten caught in the bureaucracy over the last year, and I would like to see it back on track. I have worked on language to strengthen the task force with Senator Duckworth and other members, and this is more than a bipartisan effort. This is a non-partisan issue.

Can you discuss the importance very briefly of a task force that represents our infantry, Marines, special operators, and other spe-

cialties who closely and directly impact the enemy and enemy operations, and how that would be channeled through your office?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes. I fully understand and appreciate the importance of making sure that we resource and support our men and women that are at the tip of the spear. You know, the squads and platoons are out there actually fighting the enemy. Everybody else is supporting the fight.

We have to make sure that they have what they need in order to be successful. This is an evolving effort. It will never remain static. While I do not know the reasons for things having—why they have been repositioned and reporting chains have been redesigned, I would certainly take a look at that as I go in, if I am confirmed.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Senator Heinrich?

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Austin, first off, just congratulations on your nomination, and thank you so much for your willingness to continue to serve this great country.

One of the things I want to ask you about is, if confirmed as Secretary, you are going to play a really critical role in directing defense modernization priorities that have an impact on our forces for many, many years to come. That modernization, with critical investments in technologies like directed energy or hypersonics or artificial intelligence, is what will ensure that our men and women in uniform will, hopefully, never experience a fair fight.

But modernization requires really difficult choices with regard to competing priorities. So I wanted to ask you, how will you balance investments in personnel and legacy systems with the critical need to develop capabilities that are going to give us a qualitative edge over near-peer adversaries like Russia and China?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, as you know, personnel costs are—I mean, they are expensive, and we have to be mindful about that as we go forward. We have to be willing to make sure that we are making the right calls, although they may be tough calls from time to time.

In terms of legacy systems, I think I will have to get in and work with the services to ascertain what they believe is relevant and really have a tough discussion with them on whether or not it makes sense to continue to invest in certain types of things. But I agree with you. I think we absolutely have to invest in the capabilities that will make us relevant not in the last fight, but in the future fight.

We have to be able to understand. We have to be better faster, we have to be able to decide faster, and we have to be able to act faster, and that—I mean, we will have to employ the use of space-based platforms. All the things that you talked about, the use of AI, and the development of those kinds of capabilities will not come cheap. But this is not a choice, in my view. These are things that we must invest in going forward if we are going to maintain a competitive edge.

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you for your thoughts on that.

Mr. Austin, last week in the final days of the current Administration, the Air Force announced that it had selected Huntsville, Alabama, to host the new Space Command headquarters. I believe this process, frankly, was severely flawed, and it was not in line with what I have seen historically with regard to a more deliberative approach that the Air Force has typically taken with regard to basing decisions of this magnitude.

I know you are not familiar with this decision and its details, but I would simply ask that, if confirmed, that you would take a close look at that process to make sure that it met the historical standards for decisions of that type.

Mr. AUSTIN. I will do that, and I will make sure that we look at all of our processes going forward so that future decisions are made within the confines of the policies that have been laid out.

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you. I appreciate that very much.

As you know, DOD has set an initial requirement to produce 30 plutonium pits per year at Los Alamos Labs by 2026. I would love your views on how important that milestone is to maintaining our nuclear deterrent.

Mr. AUSTIN. Could you repeat your question, Senator?

Senator HEINRICH. The Department of Defense has set an initial requirement to produce 30 plutonium pits per year at Los Alamos National Labs by 2026, and I would love your thoughts on the importance of achieving that milestone on that timeline.

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes. As we have said earlier in our discussions here this afternoon, Senator, maintaining a credible, a reliable, safe, and sustainable nuclear capability is of utmost importance, of the highest importance. This is a component of that, and certainly, if we have laid out those goals and objectives for ourselves, I am very much interested in making sure that they are the appropriate goals, but—and I have no reason to doubt that they are, but making sure that we remain on time and on target with achieving those goals.

Senator HEINRICH. I look forward to working with you on that front.

One of the last things I want to get to here in my final couple minutes is PFAS clean-up and remediation. Many communities across the country continue to suffer from enormous impacts on their water supplies from PFAS chemicals, in particular in drinking water, in ground water that is used for both drinking and, in some cases, agricultural use. One of the most hard hit of these communities is around Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico, a community that has been incredibly supportive of that facility for decades.

The Air Force and the Department of Defense more broadly have, frankly, slow-walked the clean-up and the remediation efforts for a number of years now, despite really clear evidence that defense activities are the source of that contamination. If confirmed, I would ask that you make full PFAS remediation a priority within the Department and ensure that the Department of Defense takes concrete steps to finally do right by these communities that have done right by the Department for literally decades.

Mr. AUSTIN. The safety and the health of our military members, our family members, our DOD civilians, and our communities is

very, very important to us in DOD. I think you know that Secretary Esper stood up a PFAS task force a while back and that their work is ongoing. If I am confirmed, I will go in and ask that they pick up the pace on the work, and we will want to push to make sure that we have good solutions for mitigation of our contribution to this contamination.

PFAS has been used throughout the economy, so I think we are going to have to work across—you know, across the board with our partners to ensure that we are working together, we are doing the right things to mitigate the effects here. So I look forward to working with my colleague there in the EPA to make sure that the military is doing its part, and we stay focused on the right things here.

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you, sir.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Heinrich.

Senator Tillis? Senator Rounds presiding.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Austin, can you hear me okay?

Mr. AUSTIN. I can.

Senator TILLIS. Congratulations to you and to your wife and your family, and thank you for your decades of service.

I would like to start by—well, also I want to thank you for spending some quality time down at Fort Bragg at the tip of the spear with the 82nd Airborne.

I want to associate myself with comments made by Senators Gillibrand, Ernst, and Blumenthal on military sexual assault. I do not expect you to respond to it. I heard your responses earlier. But to me, we will never know what great leaders chose never to go into the military if we continue to have a reputation for a culture that is not making progress on military sexual assault.

I have heard you make commitments to my colleagues, and I look forward to exploring this issue as a ranking member on the Personnel Subcommittee. But we have got a lot of work to do. I have been here for 6 years, and we are not making near enough progress.

I would like to start, though, by asking you to give me an idea of the general, a general overview of the threat that you believe that Iran represents to national security and security in the Middle East. I would also be curious in your answer what you think about the recent agreements with Middle East countries and Israel, whether or not that is a positive step in the right direction?

Mr. AUSTIN. Iran continues to be a destabilizing element in the region. You look at its behavior, it clearly—a lot of activity that is destabilizing. It does not work well with its neighbors. It, again, does present a threat to our partners in the region and those forces that we have stationed in the region.

If Iran were ever to get a nuclear capability, most every problem that we deal with in the region would be tougher to deal with because of that. So, to answer your question, I think Iran's activity continues to be or its behavior is—continues to be destabilizing.

Senator TILLIS. On the recent agreements, do you have any opinion as to whether or not they are a positive step to try and check Iran's ambitions in the Middle East?

Mr. AUSTIN. I do. I think that any time that we—you know, that countries agree to normalize relations, I think that is a good thing.

I think certainly this has put a bit more pressure on Iran, and I hope it will have good effects.

Senator TILLIS. Thanks, General Austin.

General Austin, you wrote in your advance policy responses, this is a quote from them, "The continued erosion of United States military advantage vis-à-vis China and Russia in key strategic areas remains the most significant risk the Department must address. If left unchecked, this continued erosion could fundamentally change our ability to achieve U.S. national security objectives and limit the DOD's ability to underpin other U.S. instruments of power."

Can you talk a little bit about the key strategic areas? We have long since thought that they had a quantitative advantage, but that we maintained a qualitative advantage. It seems like the margins are shrinking. So can you give me a brief expansion on the responses to the advance policy questions?

Mr. AUSTIN. Thanks, Senator.

They continue to invest in modernization. They have gone to school on us in terms of how we deploy and how we employ our forces. So if we would choose to do the same types of things that we have done in the past, I think that we will clearly be challenged. So we will have to have capabilities that allow us to hold—to present a credible threat—credible deterrent, excuse me, to China in the future.

We will have to make some strides in the use of quantum computing, the use of AI, the use of—the advent of connected battlefields, space-based platforms. Those kinds of things I think can give us the types of capabilities that we will need to be able to hold a large element, large pieces of Chinese inventory, military inventory at risk.

I believe that we still have the qualitative edge, have a competitive edge over China. I think that gap has closed significantly, and our goal will be to ensure that we expand that gap going forward.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

Because I have limited time, I am going to submit a question to the record on I think the economic warfare that we are dealing with on China, the race to 5G and some of the interagency activities that I do not think the DOD is prominently up there. We have got the USTR, Commerce Department, but I feel like that we are losing some ground.

I have a unique perspective on that, looking at all the intellectual property theft, as the chair of the Intellectual Property Subcommittee on Judiciary. But I have got a lot of context I want to add to that. So I want to ask a question there.

So in my remaining time, if I were in person, I would have my 600-page request for proposal for the next-generation handgun with me. It is my favorite prop when we have a confirmation like this. It just confounds me to think it took 10 years to procure the next-generation handgun, and it is going to take 10 years to deploy it. To me, it suggests a fundamental problem with the way we go about acquisitions and procurements in the Department of Defense.

So I would just seek your commitment, if confirmed, if you are going to have the kind of resources around you that are going to drill down across the business of the DOD and figure out if we are now at a point to where we can go from an investigational new

drug to an approved vaccine in 11 months, it would seem to me that we could get to a point where we can specify certain procurements in the DOD in terms of months or years, not decades.

Do I have your commitment to make sure that you make this a priority that you have someone there that has the experience and insight to figure out how we get more productivity and I think more sanity in our procurement processes?

Mr. AUSTIN. You have my commitment, Senator.

Senator TILLIS. Well, thank you, General Austin.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator ROUNDS [Presiding]. On behalf of the chairman, Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Austin, congratulations on the nomination.

Ten years after the Civil War finished, at the end of his second term as President, U.S. Grant gave a speech in Des Moines, Iowa, September 1875. Here is what he said. He was talking about the prospect of ever having another civil war.

“If we are to have another contest in the near future of our national existence, I predict that the dividing line will not be Masons and Dixons, but between patriotism and intelligence on the one side and superstition, ambition, and ignorance on the other.”

Those words are very chilling words as we contemplate what we saw in this Capitol on the 6th of January. We saw ambition. We saw superstition, if you could say superstition might be QAnon fantasy or election was stolen or widespread voter fraud. Ignorance. I do not know that I would use that word. The speech that U.S. Grant gave was to a group of Civil War veterans, and it was to promote the idea of more broad public education, the idea that education would drive out susceptibility to superstition.

It might be comforting for us to think that what we saw on January 6th or generally was ignorance, but if you look at the spectrum of people who were involved, you find a number of very highly educated people. Sadly, and I know this has been raised already, you find a lot of people who have connection to our military, who should be—as part of the enormous training investment we make in them, be able to spot the difference between truth and fantasy, between reality and conspiracy theory.

Military Times did an analysis in 2019, a survey of Active Duty military, and they found that 36 percent of Active Duty servicemembers have seen evidence of white supremacist and racist ideologies in the military. That does not mean 36 percent of military share those, but more than one-third of our military have seen their colleagues exhibiting either white supremacist or racist ideologies.

General Austin, if you are confirmed, you will make history as the first African-American Secretary of Defense, but you have also lived a life in this country and seen these challenges. I know some colleagues have asked you about investigations, but what I would like to ask you about is training. We invest so much to train a member of our military—officer, enlisted—what might you suggest to us, as we think about the training going forward, that would lead us to have a military that was immune from superstition and not so gullible as to fall for these false ideologies?

Mr. AUSTIN. Thanks, Senator.

I think that we have to train our leaders to make sure that they are in touch with the people that they are leading, that they understand who they are, what they are doing, what they are reading, that they are looking at their environment that they are living in and looking for signs of things that could indicate that something is going in the wrong direction. I think leadership needs—if leadership is not in touch with the people they are leading, these kinds of things can happen.

I do not think that this is a thing that you can put a band-aid on and fix and leave alone. I think that training needs to go on routinely because things change. The types of things that you are looking for change.

I think our leaders need to be able to talk to their subordinates and instill in them the right types of values, the values that our military embraces, the values that our country embraces. You know, failure to be able to adhere to those values means that you should not be a part of our formation, and our leaders need to be able to sort those things out.

But having had personal experience with this, being in a unit that had a problem with this long ago when I was a lieutenant colonel, I can tell you that most of us were embarrassed that we did not know what to look for, and we did not really understand that by being engaged more with your people on these types of issues can pay big dividends. I know that that unit has probably learned that forever, but I do not think that you can ever take your hand off the steering wheel here.

Senator KAINE. Well, because in a way, the enemy within—disunity—is probably the most destructive force in terms of our ability to defend ourselves. So if we are divided against one another, how can we defend the Nation? I view this as an enormously important task that you will carry, should you be confirmed.

I want to echo what comments that have been made by colleagues about military sexual assault. Again, a divider within the body that makes us less able to externally face and defeat the threats we face.

I have read much of the Citizen Review Panel that was put together to look at the tragic murder of Vanessa Guillen at Fort Hood, and that is a very, very powerful document. I would encourage all members of the committee to do it.

I spoke to one of the members of that panel, and he relayed that he was doing one of the interviews—and they did dozens and dozens of interviews—and was talking to a mid-level officer on the base who was trying to say that they felt like they were doing all they could to deal with military sexual assault. The interviewer said, “Would you let your daughter serve in the military?” He said, “No way.” He just Rorschach answered the question and said, “No way.”

Whatever the attempt to put a good spin on how we are doing, if you would worry about your own daughter serving in the military, we got a long ways to go.

Quality of life issues are enormously important. You have been asked about a lot of the strategic challenges. We face this tough one on military housing. I just want to remind my colleagues, we

started—we faced that military housing issue about 2 years after we did significant reforms to reduce the size of headquarters staff. What we found is we were kind of asleep at the switch in monitoring military housing.

An awful lot of the staffs that oversaw military housing had been dramatically shrunk because of what we did on the headquarters staff thing. That does not mean that there is not fat that could be squeezed out of any organization. It just means that we have to really be careful, thinking if we shrink the civilian side or the headquarters side, we are going to be saving some money, which we did. But we ended up compounding a problem.

I hope you will be attuned to the need to balance challenges like that so that we can provide the quality of life that our men and women and their families deserve and that will keep them re-enlisting if we want them to. If you could just say a word about that, and I am done.

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I will. I will be certainly very attuned to that, Senator.

I think, in some cases, we have broken trust with our family members because of the housing issue and other issues. I think this is critically important. I look forward to being able to work with the services to really not only get after this, the immediate problems, but put the fixes in our contracting efforts so that we are much better at this down the road.

Senator Kaine. Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator ROUNDS. On behalf of the chairman, Senator Sullivan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, General Billy Mitchell, the father of the U.S. Air Force, in a hearing like this in front of the Armed Services many years ago, in the, actually, I think it was the 1930s, called Alaska “the most strategic place in the world.” I like to say Alaska constitutes three pillars of America’s military might.

We are the cornerstone on missile defense. Almost all the missiles and radar systems protecting the entire country are in Alaska. We are the hub of air combat power for the Arctic and Asia-Pacific. We will have over 100 fifth-generation fighters there. We are building up our tanker capability, an issue that I think is going to be important. We are a platform for expeditionary forces like the 4-25, the First Stryker Brigade.

If confirmed, can I get your commitment soon in your tenure to come to Alaska with me and see this critically important national defense State and troops for America in my State?

Mr. AUSTIN. Senator, I absolutely agree with you that Alaska is a national treasure, and it has—it holds some of our most important military assets and resources. As you know, we are challenged with travel now, and as the opportunities present themselves, post trips to the Indo-Pacific where I need to get to right away, if I am confirmed, I certainly would accept your invitation at some point in the future.

Senator SULLIVAN. Well, General, a lot of us think that Alaska is kind of in the Indo-Pacific. So on your way out, we can get there early. So I look forward to doing that.

Related to that is the issue of national security in the Arctic, and that is certainly a new theater of great power competition. Russia, China being very aggressive in the Arctic with massive buildups of military forces, infrastructure. To be honest, for the last several years, I think the Pentagon was asleep at the switch with regard to our national security challenges in the Arctic.

This committee, in a bipartisan way, has been very focused on ensuring that the Pentagon recognizes these challenges with infrastructure, icebreakers that we need, capabilities. The Department of Defense released its Arctic Strategy in June 2019, required by this committee. The Air Force followed suit with its own strategy in July of 2020. The Department of the Navy just this week published its Arctic Strategic Blueprint, and the Army will soon be doing this as well.

Can I get your commitment to work with this committee, where this has been a high priority, to ensure that these service Arctic strategies are appropriately resourced and that we can protect our strategic interests in the Arctic?

Mr. AUSTIN. You have my commitment, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you.

General, the other issue I just wanted to touch on here, in this hearing that we had last week on civilian control of the military, in op-eds, you have seen it with some of my colleagues, there has been this growing conventional wisdom that somehow because Secretary Mattis had been a previous CENTCOM commander, that his tenure is a warning really for what some are considering a failed tenure as Secretary of Defense.

I actually disagree with this quite vehemently. Secretary Mattis replaced a Secretary of Defense, Secretary Carter, with no military experience. Matter of fact, he was what many people are calling for, a political Secretary. I supported both, but let me just give you a little juxtaposition.

Secretary Carter oversaw a 25 percent cut in military funding. Readiness plummeted. Secretary Mattis rebuilt this up and rebuilt readiness with this Congress.

Secretary Carter would not support arming the Ukrainians with Javelin missile systems, despite the entire committee here pressing him to do so. Secretary Mattis did that almost immediately in his tenure.

Secretary Carter watched ISIS grow to be a very lethal threat. Secretary Mattis brought DOD strategy to crush ISIS.

Secretary Carter, for a whole host of reasons, was very reluctant to press for any freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea. Secretary Mattis made those regular elements of our strategy in the Asia-Pacific.

Finally, Secretary Mattis put together the National Defense Strategy, one of the most important and bipartisan documents that many have seen on national security in a generation. He often got back to Senators quickly. In terms of oversight, with all due respect to Secretary Carter, sometime it took weeks just to schedule a phone call or a meeting.

So, General Austin, do you think Secretary Mattis had a failed tenure as Secretary of Defense because he had previously served as CENTCOM commander? I would like your assessment of that. It

is being used right now as somehow a warning for your confirmation, and I think it is a conventional wisdom that I personally reject.

Mr. AUSTIN. I do not think he should be considered as a failed Secretary of Defense because of his work in CENTCOM earlier. I think Secretary Mattis was a very thoughtful Secretary, and he did a lot of goodness for the Department. Certainly I would not want to evaluate his tenure as Secretary. I have great respect for him.

As you know, I served alongside him. I have worked with him on a number of tough issues, and I watched from afar as he was Secretary. So I have no reason to believe that his role or his tenure at CENTCOM made his tenure at—or diminished his role as the Secretary of Defense.

Senator SULLIVAN. That would not be less a reflection on what you will be able to accomplish in the Department as well? People are using that as a warning, so to speak.

Mr. AUSTIN. I think it is—I do not think that that is a fair assessment, and I would say also, Senator, that we are completely different people—

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes.

Mr. AUSTIN.—as you know. You know us both, and again, I will absolutely do the things that we have talked about in this hearing, get the right civilians in the right positions to help me exercise civilian control of the military. I will make sure that we have the very best experts focused on our toughest issues, like the China issue, the issue of our acquisition reform, and those kinds of things.

Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chairman, if I may, just one final question. General, I just want you to have the opportunity to answer two other criticisms. One, that you have not had experience in the Asia-Pacific and, two, that with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs being an Army general, that somehow your tenure, with General Milley, would be favoring the Army. Can you quickly address those two criticisms that have come about your nomination?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, I will take the last one first, Senator. If you look at my history, I spent a lot of time in joint assignments, both in Iraq and Afghanistan as the director of the Joint Staff, as commander of Central Command. You know, I have—I know as many sailors and airmen as I do soldiers, I mean if you look at the folks that I have worked with over the past.

So in terms of being able to focus adequately on the issue of China, the reason that I was focused on the Middle East for quite some time was because that was the most important thing for our country. So we put our best equipment towards that effort, our best people, and it was absolutely necessary at the time.

But if confirmed, you can expect that I will put a laser-like focus on developing the right capabilities, plans, operational concepts that will ensure that we maintain a competitive edge as we look at ourselves with respect to China. I think we will present a credible deterrent to China and any other adversary that looks to take us on.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Your time has expired.

Via Webex, Senator King is recognized.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Austin, thank you very much for your testimony. As you can see perhaps, I am on the road. You have taken me today from just south of the George Washington Bridge to the George Washington Parkway. So I am almost there.

[Laughter.]

Senator KING. First, I want to associate myself with two particular comments by my colleagues, one on the issue of the Arctic raised by Senator Sullivan. Incredibly strategic area, an area of enormous importance and developing importance.

One of the things about the Arctic is we have been able to work cooperatively with Russia on most Arctic matters, and yet they are moving very rapidly toward militarization. So I commend that area to you for attention. The Navy just released a new Arctic strategy. So a very important issue.

The other issue is procurement that Senator Tillis mentioned. The whole idea of 10 years for a handgun and a 600-page spec, we just cannot do that. We need to be more agile, particularly in this day and age where technology is so important in terms of our ability to defend the country.

So those two things I do commend to your attention, when and if you are confirmed.

Now at the beginning of the hearing, there was a lot of talk about civilian control of the military. One of the problems is, Mr. Austin, that tomorrow, when David Norquist assumes the title of Acting Secretary, he will be the 10th Secretary or Acting Secretary in 10 years. The last Secretary to serve more than 2 years was Bob Gates, and he left in 2011.

So when you have a Joint Staff that has continuity and a civilian side that manifestly lacks continuity, I think that is one of the areas where we can try to move to shore up civilian control of the military. So I guess my question is, are your bags unpacked, and are you prepared to move your loyalties from the Falcons and the Braves to the Nationals and the Washington Football Team? We want you to stay a while, Mr. Austin, if you are confirmed.

Mr. AUSTIN. You can absolutely count on me staying a while if I am confirmed, Senator, and by the way, my wife is a native of this area, of DC. So it did not—I mean, my bags are already unpacked. But to the point that you are making, I am absolutely committed to making sure that we are doing the right things for the long haul.

Senator KING. I appreciate that. To change the subject somewhat, in 2018 you gave an interview where you discussed the importance of coalitions as being one of the key elements of modern conflict. Churchill once said the only thing worse than fighting with allies is fighting without allies. Can you expand a bit on your views about coalitions and how and what we need to do to shore up our relationships with our allies?

Mr. AUSTIN. I truly believe, and I believe this in my heart, that we perform better when we are operating as a part of a team. Throughout in all of the operations that I participated in that are major operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and the counter-ISIS campaign and so many other things, our allies brought valuable capability and capacity to the fight.

I truly believe that you cannot just show up and fight and be effective. I think that these relationships have to be developed. You have to train, work, and live together in a lot of cases in order to have an effective and credible fighting force.

So I think that fighting as a part of a team, as part of a coalition is absolutely a part of who we are, something that we treasure. If confirmed, I will look forward to re-establishing some of the critical partnerships and alliances that we have had and working with our allies to make sure that we keep them onboard as we move forward fast.

Senator KING. Well, I think that is absolutely right. The way I like to put it briefly is that you have to have the relationship before the ask.

Mr. AUSTIN. I absolutely agree with that, Senator.

Senator KING. Now we are turning our attention, and have been for the last several years, to the Asia-Pacific and particularly to China. I have asked a question of a number of people that have appeared before this committee. I would like your thoughts on what does China want? What do you believe China's strategic goals are?

Are they looking to be the dominant world power or regional hegemon, an economic power? What is their—what are their goals? Because it seems to me in order to determine how we best counter or cooperate, we need to understand where they are headed.

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I think it is all of that. They are already a regional hegemon, and I think their goal is to be a dominant world power. They are working across the spectrum to compete with us in a number of areas, and it will take a whole-of-government approach to push back on our efforts in a credible way.

Not to say that we will not see things down the road that are in our best interest that we can cooperate with China on, but we do things that are in our best interest. But certainly, some of the things that we have seen from them in recent past in terms of coercive behavior in the region and around the globe tend to make us believe that they really want to be a dominant world power.

Senator KING. Finally, I do not really have time for a long answer, but I just want to commend to you with the issue of cyber, 2 years ago this committee led the creation in the National Defense Act of something called the Cyber Solarium Commission, which I was honored to serve upon, along with a bipartisan group from the Congress and the private sector and the executive. I would commend to you our report, which was released last March, talks a lot about the issues we have talked about today.

As you know and as Senator Rounds mentioned, the area of cyber is not a potential area of conflict, it is a current area of conflict. I will be sure that we get a copy of the report to you, and you can take a look at it. Because part of it is structure, but also part of it is policy, deterrence, resilience, and I think that this is something that obviously we need to attend to.

You have General Nakasone, who is crucial in this effort, and I look forward to working with you on those issues as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Austin, and congratulations on your testimony today.

Mr. AUSTIN. Thank you, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN [Presiding]. On behalf of the chairman, Senator Cramer.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

Thank you, General, for your decades of service and your willingness to continue in this new way. Congratulations to both you and your wife and your entire family.

First of all, I want to tell you how pleased I was with the very specific answer of affirming the chairman's question related to your support for a nuclear triad that includes the platforms of land, air, and sea as specified in the chairman's favorite book, the National Defense Strategy. That was very helpful to me, and I appreciate that. I appreciated the conversation we had about it and several other things last week as well.

With that specific answer to that specific question in mind, I want to drill down a little bit on just one of those three legs. As you know, as we talked about, Minot has two of the two three legs. It is the only place in the country that has two of the three legs of the triad.

You were asked—of course, you did in the qualified questions, the previous questions, you were asked about the assessment of past Secretaries of Defense, and you said this. You said, "I agree that nuclear deterrence is the Department's highest-priority mission and that updating and overhauling our Nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority." Today, you specified the words "triad."

In your advance policy question response, though, you did in referencing the aging nuclear deterrent, you chose the words "overhaul" and "updating," but you never used the word "replace." I do not know if that was simply an error or omission or if it was strategic. But you did say, "U.S. nuclear weapons have been extended far beyond their original service lives."

As Senator Fischer—earlier, she quoted Admiral Richard of STRATCOM, and I am going to quote him now in a different quote where he said, "You cannot life extend Minuteman III. It is getting past the point where it is not cost effective to life extend the Minuteman III."

But you are going to get a lot of pressure from organizations, good folks, some Members of Congress, maybe some on an Armed Services Committee either here or on the other side of the Capitol, to delay the ground-based strategic deterrent, the replacement of Minuteman III, and maybe even shrink it. Do you think that we can extend the life of Minuteman III, even that means unilaterally decreasing our nuclear deterrent?

Mr. AUSTIN. I think I may have indicated to you before that in order to really answer this question, I really need to sit down with not only the STRATCOM commander, but also sit down and take a look at where we are in that modernization effort and what choices are being proposed and the rationale for that. I have not had the ability to do that to this point, Senator Cramer. But when I do, I would love to have that discussion with you.

Senator CRAMER. Well, and I would look forward to that. On your way to INDOPACOM before you get to Alaska, you could just stop in Minot. We will have a talk right there if it works. But anyway—Senator Sullivan thinks the Arctic starts and ends in Alaska, and

I just like to remind him every now and then there is other lands between here and there.

Anyway, I wanted to ask you about the joint comprehensive plan of action that the Iran nuclear deal, and there have been some questions about Iran. But under the 2015 agreement, the restrictions on Iran's uranium enrichment sunset are beginning in 2025, and that is obviously only 4 years from now. So I want to know, in your view, are the risks of entering an agreement under the same conditions that would allow Iran to significantly increase its uranium enrichment only 4 years from now—I mean, what would some of the risks of that be, do you think?

Mr. AUSTIN. I would hope, and I think the President-Elect has been clear, that the preconditions for us considering to re-enter into that agreement would be that Iran meet the conditions outlined in the agreement. So back to—back to where they should have been.

I would hope that as we enter into that agreement, we could have this discussion about when things sunset and also take a look at some broader things that may or may not be a part of this treaty, but certainly things that I think need to be addressed. One of those things is ballistic missiles.

Senator CRAMER. Very good. Thank you. You anticipated or at least you answered my next question. I appreciate that.

Another area that you and I discussed quite a bit was ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance]. Of course, you would know more than a little bit about that, given your background particularly at CENTCOM, of course. There has been a lot of cutting of legacy programs recently to help pay for more advanced programs and technology in the future, and a lot of times we are confronted with either/or challenges. But sometimes, we have to do "all of the above" as well.

A lot of these cuts have been, of course, to ISR programs like the RQ-4 Global Hawk and the MQ-9 Reaper that, again, you depended on a lot at CENTCOM. Do you think we can strategically afford to cut back ISR to places like the Middle East, Africa, South America even, and to some degree, even the Pacific while we save up money for future missions?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, I think our—to look at our global force posture is one of the things I really want to have the opportunity to do and look at our requirements versus where our forces are postured. Our focus is going to be, as we talked earlier, in making sure that we have what we need in the Indo-Pacific.

But in terms of the sentinel forces that are required by the CENTCOM commander, I really would like to see what he thinks his requirements are, what the threats are that he needs to stay abreast of, and that sort of business. But most likely, there will be some requirements for those types of capabilities going forward. The Air Force certainly has a strong voice in this in terms of what they can afford to keep on in light of the investments that they are making in modernization.

So, again, pretty complex equation that we will have to tackle, but certainly, I look forward to taking it on.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you, General.

Thank you, Chairman. I am out of time, or I would have asked you about the \$40 billion pass through budget at the Air Force, but we can talk about that another time.

Thank you.

Senator SULLIVAN. On behalf of the chairman, Senator Warren.

Senator WARREN. Thank you very much. Thank you.

General Austin, I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak with you a few weeks ago. As I told you when we talked then, I believe we have to do a lot more to end the cozy relationship between the Pentagon and the defense industry, and over the years, I proposed number of legal changes in this area.

Now since 2016, you have served on the board of Raytheon Technologies and its predecessor, United Technologies, which is one of the largest defense contractors in the Nation. I am very pleased to hear that you have pledged that you will extend your recusal from matters involving Raytheon for 4 years and that you are not going to seek a waiver from those recusals. Do I have that right?

Mr. AUSTIN. Senator, I can make the commitment to you that I will extend my recusal for Raytheon. I certainly appreciated the opportunity to discuss these issues with you.

As you are aware, what you have asked goes beyond what is required by law, and I am making——

Senator WARREN. Absolutely.

Mr. AUSTIN. I am making this commitment because I recognize the unique circumstances here that you have highlighted, and Raytheon is one of the——

Senator WARREN. I am sorry. Go ahead.

Mr. AUSTIN. Raytheon is one of the world's largest defense contractors, and I am sensitive to the appearance concerns that you raise in this particular situation. With respect to the issue of seeking a waiver, I do not expect to do that or to need one. But if such an unanticipated circumstance were to arise, I would consider available alternatives to a waiver before seeking one and would consult very carefully with agency ethics officials.

Senator WARREN. Okay.

Mr. AUSTIN. If I am privileged enough to be confirmed, I can pledge to you that I will be mindful not only of the legal requirements that govern my conduct, but also of the appearances to ensure that the public has no reason to question my impartiality. I will consult with the DOD career ethics officials on these issues and will require everyone that serves with me to ensure that public service is and will remain a public trust.

Senator WARREN. Well, I very much appreciate that. If I can, let me just ask one more aspect of this. You know, I have also called for new laws to prevent contractors from hiring senior Government officials who leave Federal service for a period of years. Again, to help eliminate the appearance of trading on Government service to help improve—the idea is to try to help improve public trust in our leaders.

So let me ask you about that. After you leave, are you willing to make any commitments on that?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, I have—I do not intend to seek employment as a lobbyist or sit on the board of a defense contractor like Raytheon after my service. Quite frankly, I will be too old to sit on

a board of a defense contractor after my service. I have—I have no intent to be a lobbyist as well.

Senator WARREN. All right. Well, I just want you to know I really do appreciate that, General. Going above and beyond what Federal law requires, as you are doing here, sends a powerful message that you are working on behalf of the American people and no one else.

Now I want to try to focus, if I can, on defense spending. But before I do, I just want to say a very quick word about military housing.

Two years ago, this committee heard horror stories from military families about mold, termites, lead paint, other terrible conditions at military houses managed by private, for-profit companies. The military has a responsibility to oversee these contracts, and this committee has some sweeping reforms increasing oversight powers, but I am still hearing from families who say that their situation is not substantially improving.

So, General Austin, can I ask for your public commitment on two things? First, to respond to my request for information about what is going on and, second, to pledge that you are going to make fixing this problem a priority.

Mr. AUSTIN. I absolutely will respond to your request for information, if confirmed. This has been a priority of mine and will always be a priority of mine. So I look forward to working with the services on this issue. I think, as I said earlier, in some cases, we have broken trust with some of our family members.

Senator WARREN. Yes. So thank you very much. I am going to hold you to that commitment. I really appreciate it, General.

A few weeks ago, Congress passed the annual defense authorization appropriations bill that allocated over \$740 billion to the Department of Defense. Now that is more than President Reagan spent during the height of the Cold War. It is more than the Federal Government spends on the rest of the discretionary budget combined.

In fact, it is more than the next 10 nations combined spend on defense, and most of those countries are our allies. The money that Congress appropriated a few weeks ago also comes on top of what we spent on two decades of endless wars in the Middle East that cost roughly \$6.4 trillion and killed more than 7,000 American servicemembers and did very little to make America safer.

Now, General Austin, you have been nominated to lead the Defense Department. So I am not expecting you to start out your job by turning down the money that Congress just gave you, but I want to ask you a different question. Do you agree that protecting our Nation is not just about how much money our Nation spends on defense, but also about how we spend it and what specific challenges we focus on?

Mr. AUSTIN. I do. My view, as the Secretary of Defense, job one for me is the defense of this country, and we are going to do what it takes to make sure that we are successful at that. As we talked earlier, our strategy—our resources ought to match our strategy, and our strategy ought to match our policy. So, again, I think I have a requirement to be a good steward of our resources, but you can count on me always asking for what we need to accomplish the strategy that has been laid out for us.

Senator WARREN. Well, I appreciate the approach that looks at how we are spending that money and exactly what challenges we are focusing our money on.

I see that I am out of time. So I am not going to get to ask you about the importance of investing in our diplomatic corps and making sure that we have adequate funding for the State Department in order to help you in the defense of our Nation. I promise, though, I will send you some questions for the record about that.

Thank you very much.

Mr. AUSTIN. That is an easy answer for me, Senator. I think it is absolutely important that the State Department be resourced adequately.

Senator WARREN. Good. That is what I like to hear. Thank you, General.

Chairman INHOFE [Presiding]. Thank you, Senator Warren.

Now via Webex, Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT. Hi, thanks. Chairman, can you hear me all right?

Chairman INHOFE. Loud and clear.

Senator SCOTT. Okay, and thank you, Chairman, for holding this meeting.

First off, I want to thank General Austin for all of his hard work. We had the opportunity to work together when he was at CENTCOM, and I just want to thank the general for his distinguished service as a soldier and commander and just what a great job he did in the military. So I am very appreciative.

We had the opportunity to talk the other day, and so if you could talk a little bit about how if you look at the people in the military just have not spent a whole bunch of time dealing with the risk of Communist China and how you will get up to speed. Because we actually do not have the same experience in dealing with Communist China as we do with people in the—dealing with the Middle East.

So, General Austin, can you talk a little bit about how you will get up to speed and how important you think it is to get up to speed on the risk of Communist China?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, I think it is absolutely important. As I outlined in my opening statement, Senator Scott, I think China is our most challenging—our most significant challenge going forward. So you can expect that I will continue to focus the resources of the Department on this issue to make sure that we are prepared to meet any challenge and that we continue to present a credible deterrent to China or any other aggressor who would want to take us on and convince them that that would be a really bad idea.

The issue of China, though, is very complex, and I fully recognize that while I have the military component of this problem set, it is a whole-of-government approach because China looks to compete with us along a spectrum of activities, you know, economic and IT and cyber and space and other domains. So we will have the right experts. We will have the right capabilities and plans and operational concepts that are required to make sure that we are effective in our efforts to deter China and any other aggressor.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, General Austin.

So you, in your military career, you did a great job of building teams. From the people I have heard, including Senator Sullivan,

you built a great team to get the results you wanted. In this job, in this role, you have to do the exact same thing. So how are you going to be able to vet the people that will be working with you to make sure that they share your view on the importance of holding Communist China accountable and actually make sure we are a great deterrent to their ambition to dominate at a minimum the Indo-Pacific region?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, certainly, I will issue the—I will make sure that I issue the appropriate guidance to focus the Department's efforts on this issue. We will make sure that the right processes and procedures are in place to review our efforts and to coordinate our efforts to make sure that we are operating as a joint force.

You mentioned teams, and part of the team effort here is obviously and certainly with our allies. I think it is really important to make sure that we continue to reach out to our allies, we build the capacity necessary to be effective against China. Those allies include—certainly include the people in the region, but they also include allies around the rest of the globe.

So I will issue the right guidance. We will have the right policies in place and the right mechanisms to make sure that we are operating as a joint force and that we are focused appropriately and acquiring the right technologies to make sure that we are relevant going forward.

Senator SCOTT. Do you believe that with the Biden administration, you will have the opportunity to have influence on the people that will be part of your team internally to make sure that they share your view on the importance of holding Communist China accountable?

Mr. AUSTIN. I absolutely believe that, Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT. Okay, and one thing that Senator Sullivan brought up to me when I spoke to him yesterday about you was the fact that with your military background, you will be one of the few individuals in the Biden administration that will have the military background. Do you believe you will have the ability to influence their—influence and convince them of the importance of having a strong military to be able to be a great deterrent and a great promoter of world peace?

Mr. AUSTIN. I do, Senator Scott. I also believe that I have a great relationship with the President-Elect, and I certainly would like to be able to express my views to him as frequently as necessary.

Senator SCOTT. One of the issues we are dealing with is ambiguity with regard to Taiwan. I think a lot of us believe that Taiwan is worth making sure that we can continue—help them continue as a democracy and as an entity independent of Communist China. Well, how—I personally believe we have got to quit being ambiguous, and we have got let Communist China know the importance of Taiwan to us, and how would you do that to make sure that we are not sitting here down the road having to make a decision that Communist China has decided to invade Taiwan?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, certainly, our efforts will be to ensure that we do everything to make sure that China does not take that decision. But our support to Taiwan has been rock solid over the years, and it has been bipartisan support, and I would certainly want to thank

this committee for their support and their willingness to work together on this issue.

We have been strong in our commitments, and certainly, if I am confirmed as Secretary of Defense, I will make sure that we are living up to our commitments to support Taiwan's ability to defend itself.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, General Austin.

Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Manchin?

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General. Appreciate very much your service and your family's dedication and commitment to our country.

Sir, the 7-year cooling-off period, you have 5 years you have been in the private sector. What do you think could be accomplished in 2 more years? What are we missing there? I mean, I think that you segued pretty well into the private sector and understand the balance there.

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, certainly, I will be 2 years older, but certainly, I do not think I will be—I will have any more commitment—

Senator MANCHIN. And change.

Mr. AUSTIN.—to serving as a civilian than I have now.

Senator MANCHIN. Just from history, people know that it used to be 10 years. Then we changed it to 7 years. We should be looking at the quality of the person at the time we need them.

Mr. AUSTIN. Senator Manchin, I absolutely agree. It is about what is in the mind and the heart of the person that is being asked to serve, and I certainly agree with you on that.

Senator MANCHIN. The strength of our military and the admiration the whole world has for it is because of the separation and led by the private sector, and have the knowledge you have and being able to come from the private sector now, I think it is going to be a great asset.

There are other people in that cooling-off period down the chain. Do you see any need to have any waivers for those? Because I think it is a much smaller waiver. Most of it is 180 days. People do not understand that either. It is a very short period of time, but yet the person that we need to lead it.

Mr. AUSTIN. We have not yet completely fleshed out who would be serving in key positions. But if there is talent there that is a China expert or something else that we really need, I think it is important to—to kind of weigh that out—

Senator MANCHIN. To have the flexibility.

Mr. AUSTIN.—and make sure that we are focused on the right thing.

Senator MANCHIN. Well, I know you will get the right people. A couple things. The people have been asking me ever since I just came in today about tomorrow's security. Right now, there has been 12 Guardsmen that have been relieved from the detail, and you talked about an experience you had in your earlier life in the military.

What do you see? I mean, it is a concern that I have now more so than ever before, and more people, we never realized it. But now we are seeing that all the conspiracy theories and all the different

people are on the dark web, or wherever they are, are being recruited that have military experience. What can we do, and how should we approach this?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, I think we can do a better job of screening our—you know, the folks that we bring in, the people that we bring in. I also think we need to do a better job of once we have people onboard, that we are paying attention to them, that we are creating the right kind of environment for them to live in, and that they are embracing the values that we think are important in the military and the values that are important for this country.

I think this is a thing that we have to work at day in and day out.

Senator MANCHIN. Knowing the presence of what we have and what we are dealing with and what happened last week, how do you feel about the security we have for tomorrow?

Mr. AUSTIN. I do not know the specifics or the moving parts. The Secret Service is, I think, in charge of the overall effort. I think I have every reason to believe that they will do a very credible job and provide for our security.

I have confidence in our Guard. Again, the fact that we are screening people and making sure that we do not have the wrong kinds of people in the formation I think is a credit to their efforts.

Senator MANCHIN. Well, you know that all the reports, and we do not have all the evidence yet and all of the—but we will have that probably during this new trial we have coming up that the ball was dropped at the Department of Defense, that we did not get the support we needed or the help we needed or the protection we needed quick enough.

Mr. AUSTIN. I think that is still under review, Senator.

Senator MANCHIN. Yes, yes.

Mr. AUSTIN. And you know——

Senator MANCHIN. I am not accusing until we see the facts——

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

Senator MANCHIN.—but that has been the reports coming out. So I know that you have a lot of work ahead of you trying to build up that confidence level and the morale.

Mr. AUSTIN. Right.

Senator MANCHIN. If I can ask you the greatest threat that we face as a country, if you were going to name one of the greatest threats or the greatest challenge you think you are going to have coming into this position, what would it be?

Mr. AUSTIN. I think there are a number of challenges——

Senator MANCHIN. I know.

Mr. AUSTIN.—as we discussed before, and quite frankly, the greatest challenge to our country right now, Senator Manchin, is the pandemic. It has killed over 400,000 of our America citizens, and that is just an incredible, incredible loss of life. I think we have to do everything that we can to break the cycle of transmission and to begin to turn this thing around. I know that the President-Elect is very, very much focused on this.

I think DOD can add value to this effort and speed and scale, and I would certainly hope—again, if I am confirmed, one of the first things I will do is take a look at how we are contributing, and

if there is more that we can do—and I believe that there probably will be—that we will lean into this and help this effort along.

You know, in terms of other challenges, we have talked about China, we have talked about Russia, we have talked about—

Senator MANCHIN. The pandemic is number one, though, you think from your standpoint?

Mr. AUSTIN. China is the most concerning competitor that we are facing.

Senator MANCHIN. Let me ask you this about finances. John McCain, the late John McCain, my dear friend, and we all knew John pretty well. If you worked with John, you knew John pretty well. He made sure of that.

But John and I had a bill that we always worked on, auditing the Pentagon, auditing the Department of Defense. It was the only agency in all of Government that was never audited. But they have been doing a good job, but they are still a little bit relaxed there. I just would like for your commitment on that to do everything you can to make sure that the finances that people know how we are investing their money and what type of return we are getting on that.

Mr. AUSTIN. You have my commitment, Senator.

Senator MANCHIN. Let me just say this, sir. I truly believe with all my heart you are the right person at the right time to do this job because it is a tremendous undertaking. I think to restore the confidence back to the American people that our Defense Department basically is there to defend us and it is basically run by the civilians, who basically who are not going to let military be used against us at any time. What we saw last Wednesday was an anomaly that will never happen again.

Thank you, sir. I look forward to voting for you.

Mr. AUSTIN. I look forward to working with you, Senator, if I am confirmed. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Manchin.

Now via Webex, Senator Blackburn.

Senator BLACKBURN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate this and the opportunity to talk with General Austin.

I will say, General, I enjoyed our conversation yesterday so much. Thank you very much for your time, and thank you to your family for sticking with you as you go through this process.

I will say, and we discussed this, I am one of those who is not in favor of waivers. I believe that rules are—and processes are put in place over time because of specific reasons. With that said, however, you and I do have mutual friends, and they have all spoken to your strength of character, the way that you fulfill your role, the work that you did with the military, and the leadership that you bring to different situations. I thank you for that.

I do want to go back to the topic we discussed, the issue of China. We talked about a quote that is attributed to you about strategic patience, and you had applied that to China. You thought it was an attribution or mentioned it was an attribution in the article, but I went back and looked at this, and it was a quote from an interview and, thus, later picked up by Asia Today or Asia

Times and other foreign policy articles and, as you have heard from other members on the Committee, China.

I think you also believe China and great power competition is our greatest threat. Whether we are looking at what is happening on the economic side, and I appreciate you mentioned that earlier, because we discussed we do not know exactly where MOFCOM [Ministry of Commerce] ends or where their economic sector ends and their military sector begins.

So what I would like for you to do is spend a minute and talk about why you cannot use strategic patience with China and why it is an imperative that we address the economic and the military side of that China problem coin, if you will, and how your budget priorities are going to reflect the desire to deal with China, to work with Taiwan, to work with Hong Kong? So if you would take a minute and just address that for us.

Mr. AUSTIN. I think over the last two decades, Senator, as we have been focused on—necessarily focused on issues in the Middle East, we have seen China modernize its military. We have seen it—we have seen it employ aggressive, in some cases coercive behavior against our allies in the region. We have seen it do a number of things that tend to make us believe that China really wants to be the preeminent power in the world in the not-too-distant future.

I think, again, China looks to compete with us against—looks to compete with us in a number of areas across a spectrum that includes, as you pointed out, economics, cyber, competition in the domain of space. So China, because of its desires, because of its worldview, is clearly a competitor that we have to make sure that we begin to check their aggression.

It will require a whole-of-government effort to do that. The Department of Defense's piece in this is to make sure that we are presenting a credible deterrent to China so that it will think twice before it decides to take on the United States of America, China or any other aggressor.

That requires investment in a number of areas. We have talked about this a bit before.

Senator BLACKBURN. Yes.

Mr. AUSTIN. In modernization, things like AI and space-based platforms and directed energy and just a number of things. If we are called upon to conduct operations against a near peer such as China or Russia, it is a different type of engagement, and we need different capabilities. We need the operational concepts that can employ those capabilities. Again, as I said earlier, we will be required to understand what is going on on the battlefield much better, much faster, be able to decide very—a lot quicker, and then be able to act a lot quicker.

Senator BLACKBURN. Well, I appreciate that, and I think it is important for the record to reflect that you do not view dealing with China as a strategic patience. It is a different approach than we have had with ISIS.

Let me move on. We also talked a little bit about workforce and utilization of the Guard. As we look at some of the skill sets that are necessary moving into 5G deployment, a utilization of artificial intelligence, building out ISR, and some of those areas. So for the

record, make a comment about Guard recruitment, retention, and how you would interface the Guard with the Active Duty men and women.

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, we certainly have great talent in our Guardsmen and that we have seen that on display throughout these years of conflict that we have been in. Our Guard has performed very, very well.

Many of our Guardsmen have skills that you do not typically find in a normal unit or a normal organization, and so I think in a lot of cases, we can do a better job of leveraging those skills, those unique skill sets to help our efforts in things like IT and other things.

Senator BLACKBURN. Well, thank you for that. We appreciate your service. We appreciate your time today.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the hearing. I yield back.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Blackburn.

Now via Webex, Senator Peters.

Senator PETERS. Well, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Austin, I want to say thank you. Thank you for your service over many, many years to this country, and thank you for your willingness to take on this job. Clearly, we are in an incredibly difficult time in our history, and we are facing significant challenges, and your willingness to serve your country once again is commendable. So, thank you.

I want to pick up briefly on some comments made by my colleague Senator Heinrich, and I think although you answered his question, I think it is important for you to know that there are many of us on this committee that are very concerned about PFAS contamination in military sites across the country. Clearly, this is a bigger problem than just military sites. We have got PFAS sites throughout the country.

Michigan has been particularly hard hit with sites containing this very toxic chemical. In fact, I think of the 700 sites identified around the country, roughly 200 of them are in Michigan, although we think the reason that number is so high is just because we have been looking for it more than other States. It is likely to continue.

But we do have military sites that have been impacted, and one in particular in Michigan, which is the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Oscoda. The folks in Oscoda and that area have been dealing with this contamination for many years. They are, and rightly so, incredibly frustrated by the slowness from the Air Force and others to deal with it.

We have started to see some pick-up in activity in clean-up, but they have waited too long. I know you made a commitment to Senator Heinrich to expedite this, but I want you to know that this is a major issue for me, for folks in Michigan, folks around Wurtsmith Air Force Base, as well as other military sites across the country. I am sure many of my other colleagues would join in.

I hope that you are, indeed, committed to making sure we do right by these communities that have hosted these bases for years and are now suffering the consequences. So I do not know if you want to add anything to what your response was to Senator Heinrich, but please know this is a serious issue for us across the country.

Mr. AUSTIN. No, I am committed, Senator. I think, as I said earlier, that the health and welfare of our military members, our families, our DOD civilians, and our communities is very, very important. Again, Secretary Esper stood up a PFAS task force. I will check in with them and make sure that I expedite their work if at all possible.

Certainly, I look forward to working with my EPA counterpart on this issue. I think it is very, very important to mitigate the effects of these contaminants as soon as we can. You can look for us to stay committed to that.

Senator PETERS. I appreciate that, General. Thank you so much.

You mentioned it in a number of questions about the changing nature of warfare, and we are on the cusp of major changes as a result of technology. You alluded to some in the last answer, whether it is AI, automation, directed weapons. We just know that we are in a technological revolution that will change the way we live dramatically. When that happens, that also changes the face of warfare in dramatic ways.

It is not just the complexity of our tools, but as you mentioned, it is the strategic and operational environment as well. So it is going to require some really—some creative thinking outside of normal policies in how we prepare for this change. I think a lot of that requires changing some of the culture, particularly when you have a large bureaucratic organization like the Department of Defense. That is no different than any other large bureaucratic organization. It is sometimes difficult to get out of the established mindsets and understand that things are changing rapidly.

So guidance from the top is incredibly important. That means in my mind—and love to have your thoughts. That means placing a premium on digital skills by expanding eligibility for billets in the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center, for example, Defense Innovation Unit and their service-level equivalents both inside as well as outside the Department.

So, General, if you can give me a sense of how do you assess the ability, for example, of defense innovation offices to develop systems that are going to be able to enhance both our performance and our effectiveness. As you are thinking of this and answering this question, try to mention in particular how this will be helpful as we start operating perhaps more below the threshold of armed conflict, which may likely be an emerging pattern that we have to deal with more often than we would like.

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes. So I think it is really important that we have the ability to develop the kinds of capabilities that you just described, Senator. You asked specifically about the people that we have that are dedicated to and working on these issues and whether or not it is we are managing them the right way. Something that I will have to look at.

I will have to go in and talk to the leadership about what their needs are and how we can improve our efforts right now. I look forward to that conversation, but I would not want to speculate on that issue right now.

But I really believe that what you just said is absolutely important. We have got to be able to develop the ability to move things

with the appropriate speed and focus that will enable us to be relevant going forward.

Senator PETERS. I think part of that speed—and there have been several questions related to the procurement process—is a lot of this innovation in the past would take place within the Department of Defense. Now we are seeing a lot of this innovation in commercial markets, in the commercial sector. But as you integrate that and having an era of centers or innovation centers that work with those commercial centers, I think they are incredibly important.

I am happy to say in Michigan, we have our Ground Vehicle Systems Center that takes advantage of the auto industry and some of the developments we are seeing in automation. Would you commit to continuing to invest in those kinds of programs that work in partnership with advanced innovation in the commercial sector?

Mr. AUSTIN. I think automation is really important to us. You have heard a number of leaders talk about that, and I think we are going to—that will be an area of focus for us going forward.

Senator PETERS. Well, I appreciate it, General. Thank you.

I yield back.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Peters.

Via Webex, Senator Hawley.

Senator HAWLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General, for being here, and congratulations on your nomination. It is always nice to see a graduate of Webster University in St. Louis before the committee. So congratulations on that as well.

Let me come back to something you said at the very beginning of your testimony, during your statement at the beginning. You said that China is a pacing threat, “a pacing threat.” I just want to be clear. Are there other pacing threats, and what would they be?

Mr. AUSTIN. China is the most significant competitor that we are focused on. It is the pacing threat.

Senator HAWLEY. Thank you for that. That is a helpful clarification.

On that same point, you are going to have the opportunity here to oversee the next National Defense Strategy. You have said, and other committee members have quoted this today, you have talked about the competition, strategic competition with China and Russia. You have also said today, though, several times, including to me just now that you think that China is “the pacing threat” or China is the top priority. So can you commit to us that as you oversee the next NDS that China will be unequivocally identified as the top challenge, threat, competitor of the United States?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes. Clearly, the strategy will be arrayed against the threat, and China is—presents the most significant threat going forward because China is ascending. Russia is also a threat, but it is in decline. It can still do a great deal of damage, as we have seen here in recent days, in an area—and it is a country that we have to remain—maintain some degree of focus on. But China is the pacing threat.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good, and you would expect—just to press my point here, but you would expect to see that identified—China, that is, identified as the pacing threat in the next National Defense

Strategy? In other words, you do not see any reason why that would not be the case? Is that correct?

Mr. AUSTIN. That follows. That makes sense, Senator Hawley, I think. But again, I certainly do not want to try to write the strategy here. We want to make sure we go through the process of arraying the threats and identifying what capabilities we are going to place against them. But it certainly follows it is the pacing issue, the pacing threat currently, and I fully expect that it will remain so going forward.

Senator HAWLEY. Good. Well, I am pressing you on it only because I think there has been some confusion with the last National Defense Strategy, the way it has been interpreted in some quarters to put China and Russia on a plane. What you just said just a second ago I think is very encouraging, that China is the pacing threat.

Russia, of course, is a threat. There is no doubt about that. But to your words, it is in decline, and of course, we have limited resources and capacities, and we are going to have to make sure that those limited resources and capacities are deployed corresponding to the relevant threat. So I am encouraged by what you said. I am going to hold you to that.

Let me shift to Taiwan, which is obviously closely related. I would like to follow up on something Senator Scott asked you about.

Under the Taiwan Relations Act, the United States has committed to maintaining the capacity to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security of the people of Taiwan. Given our obligations under that statute, General, do you agree that DOD should maintain the ability to deter a Chinese fait accompli when it comes to Taiwan?

Mr. AUSTIN. Senator, you came in broken on that last piece there. If I could ask you to repeat the end of that, please?

Senator HAWLEY. Yes. When it comes to Taiwan, General, do you agree that the Department of Defense should clearly prioritize defeating a fait accompli scenario in Taiwan on the part of China, the attempt to invade, their pressure that would put us in a fait accompli scenario. Should that be our top priority?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, certainly, I do not want to go down the road of getting into hypotheticals about what we would do if certain things happened. I would just say that my job as the Secretary of Defense, if confirmed, is to present credible options to the President to ensure that we can protect our interests and defend ourselves.

You know, one of our interests is to make sure that Taiwan—and a commitment is to make sure that Taiwan has the ability to defend itself. We will stay committed to that going forward.

Senator HAWLEY. Yes, and I certainly appreciate the fact that you cannot anticipate all threats going forward. However, we do have to plan. To go back to points you have made about husbanding our scarce resources, making sure that we are using them well, we have got to identify the scenarios that we are prioritizing to plan for.

I just want to say, ask you one more time, with regard to the fait accompli scenario in Taiwan, which is identified, of course, in the current—the 2018 National Defense Strategy, is that a scenario

you think we ought to prioritize in our planning purposes in order to deter China?

Mr. AUSTIN. Again, we are committed, we have been committed to the support of Taiwan throughout. Again, it has been bipartisan support. We will remain committed to supporting Taiwan, and so we will have the right options available to protect our interest and to defend ourselves.

Senator HAWLEY. Let me shift to Afghanistan here briefly, General, in the time I have got remaining. If the Taliban violates its part of the peace agreement, there is going to be significant pressure on the President-Elect to send thousands of troops back into Afghanistan and perpetuate the cycle that we have seen there.

How do you think we should respond if the Taliban violates our peace agreement so that we can achieve our counterterrorism objectives without increasing the number of troops that we have there in the region?

Mr. AUSTIN. Senator, you know that we are currently operating as a part of a coalition effort there in Afghanistan. What I have heard General Milley and General Miller say publicly is that they believe they have adequate resources to accomplish the objectives that they are assigned currently.

If I am confirmed, as I go in, I would like to be able to assess the situation myself and then make my recommendations to the President in terms of what is required and what is not required.

Senator HAWLEY. I see my time has expired. Thank you again, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Hawley.

Finally, we now have, via Webex, Senator Duckworth.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I spoke in this committee last week about my concerns with making exceptions to allow any person to serve as Secretary of Defense less than 7 years after leaving regular military service. Mr. Austin, you and I spoke about this issue on our recent call as well. I want to reiterate that my concerns are the same now as they were when we considered Secretary Mattis' nomination 4 years ago.

My vote against a waiver that would allow you to serve as Secretary of Defense has everything to do with restoring the bedrock principle of civilian control of the military and nothing to do with you, your qualifications, or your character. Last week, I pledged to my colleagues that if they choose to pass an exception to the statute, I will consider your nomination fairly and on its merits. Mr. Austin, I make that same promise to you today.

Based on our call last week, in fact, I feel we are aligned in our thoughts on a number of the most urgent national security issues facing our country. I am pleased to get the chance now to follow up on a few of those challenges that I believe the DOD is facing that concerns me the most.

First, I have raised alarms before about President Trump's total disregard for good order and discipline. Over the last 4 years, he has valorized ruthless killing and pardoned war criminals like convicted former SEAL Eddie Gallagher. He directly undermined leaders like former Naval Special Warfare Commander Admiral Green,

who attempted to hold servicemembers accountable when they violated their oaths and failed to uphold good order and discipline.

Then some communities, like the SEAL community, were already struggling with servicemembers drifting from their core values likely due to the stress of 19 years of war and deployments. President Trump's rhetoric has damaged attempts to restore discipline in our Department of Defense. Now in the fallout of violent insurrection at the Capitol on January 6th, we are starting to learn the depth of the problem in our military services.

Veterans, Active Duty troops, members of the National Guard have already been found to have participated in an actual attack on elected leaders and our constitutional process in direct violation of their oaths of office. We have seen significant reporting on the ways that extremist groups specifically target military members and veterans, and it is likely that we will discover more in the coming weeks.

Mr. Austin, it is clear that we are at a crisis point. We need strong leadership to root out extremists in the military and reaffirm the core values that have defined military service. If confirmed, what steps would you take to assert your leadership, set the example for the service chiefs, and reinstate good order and discipline?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, the activity that we have seen recently in terms of potential racist or extremist behavior within our ranks is, in my view, absolutely unacceptable. I think you have heard the chiefs, service chiefs and the Chairman recently speak to that as well.

I will work with the leaders of the various departments to make sure that it is absolutely clear to everyone in the Department, military or civilian, that this is behavior that does not—does not fit our values, does not comport with our values. So I will want the leaders of all of the services and all the Departments to make sure that they are doing the right things to set the right example and to create the right climate that discourages and eliminates that type of behavior.

This is not something that we can be passive on. This is something I think we have to be active on, and we have to lean into it and make sure that we are doing the right things to create the right climates.

Senator DUCKWORTH. There needs to be consequences for bad actors as well?

Mr. AUSTIN. Certainly, if someone is accused and an investigation determines that that person is guilty of that type of behavior, then we will take the appropriate actions.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

Mr. Austin, you oversaw one of our military's largest and most complex logistics operations in Iraq. So you understand better than most, almost anyone else going forward we cannot rely on the same logistics system and practices that we used in Iraq and Afghanistan as we look to future potential areas of conflict.

Great power competition demands that we innovate our approach to logistics, and so it is critical that we invest in United States Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) and ensure that logistics-related planning factors are central to our op plans and our major

exercises. If confirmed, what initiatives will you prioritize to ensure that confrontation command and the rest of the DOD's logistics enterprise is modernized and resourced to support global operations and to withstand threats from peer competitors, especially when we are talking about in contested environments?

Mr. AUSTIN. I think, Senator, you are absolutely correct. Our logistics capabilities really enable us to do the great work that we have done around the globe. I think we have to continue to invest in the right things. I look forward to having a conversation with our senior logistics leaders in all of the branches and also in the Department as well.

I want to invest in those types of things that can provide us innovative approaches to delivering the types of logistics that we will need to sustain ourselves. I agree with you that we will not be able to do business as we have always done it going forward, as we are looking to compete with a near-peer competitor.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

The DOD is also well positioned to lead the way on developing the kind of clean energy technology that can accelerate our fight against climate change, one of the biggest national security threats of our time, and reduce the military's reliance on fossil fuel, which would shorten that logistics tail. If confirmed, how would you lead DOD to reduce its emissions and develop the sort of breakthrough energy technology that can make forward-deployed troops less reliant on fuel delivery and other energy-related sustainment?

Mr. AUSTIN. Well, I think while we are no doubt doing some things on all of our installations now to reduce our energy consumption and reduce our carbon footprint, I think there is more that we can do. You know, we consume a lot of energy, and so I think that we can have a substantial impact if we are focused on the right things.

You know, this affects us in a lot of ways. I think that if we look at utilization on installations in other capacity, utilization of electrical vehicles and reducing the amount of energy that we are consuming and just a number of other things, we can make a pretty substantial impact on our overall effort here. I look forward to working with the Administration and my colleagues and working with the Department to really improve our performance thus far.

I will appoint a specific person on my staff to help me focus on this issue and to coordinate issues within the Department and within the services as well.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you very much. I am over time, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman INHOFE. All right. I have been told that this completes our members that were wanting to participate, and we want to thank you very much, General Austin, for the time you have given us, and we look forward to working with you.

Senator Reed, did you want to make any further comments?

Senator REED. Mr. Chairman, no. I just want to thank you for conducting this hearing and thank General Austin for participating, and good luck, sir.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you, Senator Reed.

When we meet again 2 days from now, I think you will be the chairman, and I will be the ranking member. That transition will take place very peaceably—

[Laughter.]

Chairman INHOFE.—and I want to tell you how we have enjoyed working together for a number of years, and we will continue to do that.

Senator REED. Mr. Chairman, it has been an honor and a great pleasure working with you, and I think, with your leadership, we have accomplished a great deal, and I thank you.

Chairman INHOFE. Thank you very much.

General Austin, did you have any other—any questions that were not asked that you would like to volunteer answers to now? I think the answer is no.

Mr. AUSTIN. That is correct, Mr. Chairman. I just want to thank you and the committee members for allowing me the time this afternoon to engage with you, and I want to thank you all also for the tremendous support that you have given to our military over the years. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and doing the same kinds of things that you have done in the past.

Again, thanks.

Chairman INHOFE. That is good. Thank you very much.

We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 6:37 p.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Prepared questions submitted to Mr. Lloyd J. Austin III by Chairman Inhofe prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Question. Section 113 of Title 10, U.S. Code, establishes the Secretary of Defense as the head of the Department of Defense (DOD) and principal assistant to the President in all matters relating to the Department.

What background, experience, and expertise do you possess that qualify you to serve as Secretary of Defense?

Answer. I believe my past experience has provided me the necessary leadership skills, geo-political acumen and deep understanding of joint and combined operations to serve this country as Secretary of Defense. I know how to work collaboratively with interagency partners, and I know how to lead, plan and operate with allies and partner nations.

Having been to war, I also know well the life and death decisions any Secretary of Defense has to make. I am prepared to make those decisions, informed by my own experience. Finally, I believe the experiences gained in the five years since I retired—with nonprofit organizations, academia, and private sector businesses—have broadened my skills and my views.

I have worked extensively with our partners in other agencies (State, CIA etc.). Also, I have a wealth of experience in working with our allies and building teams.

Question. Dr. Eliot Cohen, Dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, has written that, “... the Secretary of Defense represents the Armed Forces to society at large, and far more important, represents society to the Armed Forces. Selecting a civilian ensures that civilian perspectives dominate, as they should.”

Given your significant and recent military experience, if confirmed as Secretary of Defense, how would you approach your leadership of DOD to ensure that “civilian perspectives dominate”?

Answer. I have served in multiple senior military positions, working closely with civilian superiors and colleagues, and have appreciated both their perspectives on the difficult challenges confronting our Nation and the importance of their authority

over our military. If confirmed, I will ensure that the authority and responsibilities of DOD's senior civilian leadership are clearly understood throughout the Department of Defense, and I will ensure that I receive advice and counsel from a diverse team, military and civilian, with perspectives and experiences from across the spectrum. Further, if confirmed I will actively ensure in my leadership, words and actions that civilian leadership of the Department is understood and is preeminent.

Question. What skills and attributes would you bring to the table in executing your duties to "represent the Armed Forces to society at large, and ... represent [] society to the Armed Forces"?

Answer. I understand that, if confirmed, one of my responsibilities will be to represent the men and women of the Department of Defense to the American people and will do that with transparency, integrity and honesty. Though it is clear the American people support their military, it is not clear to me that they fully understand the scope of the sacrifices that military personnel and their families make each day.

My time in uniform, and frankly my time thus far as a civilian, provide me a unique opportunity to help close this gap in understanding. I'm certainly aware of the historic nature of my nomination, and I believe that, too, will help raise awareness of the diversity in our ranks and the need to keep fielding a military that itself represents the breadth of American society.

I obviously have extensive knowledge of how the military operates and what the challenges are. My depth of understanding of the challenges facing our military members and their families not only helps me to better address their needs, but it helps me to accurately tell their stories to the public.

Question. If confirmed, and given your observations and experience, what innovative ideas would you consider implementing with regard to the structure and operations of the DOD?

Answer. In my experience, building and leading high performing teams requires excellent communication, unity of purpose, selfless service and agility. If confirmed, I will use the first weeks of my tenure to emphasize these characteristics, and I will look for opportunities to improve the structure or operations to ensure we are as effective and efficient as possible.

I believe we need to re-invigorate our alliance participation and support; that we need to reconsider our investments in technology, research and development, and that we need to continue to look for ways to improve the integration of joint capabilities.

Question. If confirmed, what duties and functions would you assign to the Deputy Secretary of Defense?

Answer. If I am confirmed, the Deputy Secretary of Defense would be a 'full partner' with me in decision-making, setting policy, and running the Department. If confirmed, I would expect the Deputy to be—more often than not—the last person in the room with me before I make an important decision. The traditional focus of the Deputy Secretary is similar to that of a Chief Operating Officer in managing the day-to-day business and functions of a large, complicated organization. If confirmed, I intend to continue this model. This would include, most notably, driving the programming and budgeting cycle to modernize the force and reform the Department.

MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Question. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you will face if confirmed as Secretary of Defense and what are your plans to address each challenge?

Answer. The most urgent challenge we face is the pandemic. If confirmed, I will immediately review DOD's support to the broader U.S. Government effort and increase the speed and scale of our support, while maintaining military readiness. Globally, I believe the most significant challenge I will face will be to ensure the Department of Defense's continued efforts to prepare and strengthen the U.S. military for a dynamic, future security landscape driven by accelerating competitions with China and with Russia—with China as our pacing threat in most areas—while still ensuring our ability to deter today's range of threats. DOD, in concert with our interagency and international partners and allies, will play a crucial role in deterring Chinese and Russian aggression, while still contending with threats emanating from Iran and North Korea and countering terrorism. We must also address risks to the U.S. Homeland, including demands for defense support to civil authorities.

If confirmed, I pledge to be transparent with the American people and this Congress about what is necessary to advance the security of the United States.

CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY

Question. Section 113 of Title 10, United States Code, provides that “[a] person may not be appointed as Secretary of Defense within seven years after relief from Active Duty as a commissioned officer of a regular component of an Armed Force.”

Under what circumstances do you believe it is appropriate for Congress to provide an exception to this law?

Answer. I understand and respect the intent of the law. The safety and security of our democracy demands civilian control of our Armed Forces, the subordination of military power to the civil. Congress must determine whether an exception is appropriate. I have served the United States for over 40 years in uniform, and I respect and appreciate the fundamental importance of civilian control over the military. I know first-hand what is expected from our senior military leaders in their interactions with, and support of, the Department’s civilian leadership. Moreover, through my experiences both in and out of uniform, I know what is required of the civilians tasked with leading our military services.

Question. What are your personal views on the principle of civilian control of the military?

Answer. I believe civilian control of the military is fundamental to our democracy. I spent 41 years as a military officer swearing an oath to the Constitution and to the concept of civilian control. I understand the different roles and responsibilities between military officers and civilian leadership. If confirmed, I will carry out my duties as the civilian Secretary.

Question. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to ensure that your tenure as Secretary of Defense epitomizes the fundamental requirement for civilian control of the Armed Forces embedded in the U.S. Constitution and other laws?

Answer. Since the beginning of my journey in the military as a cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point almost 50 years ago, to my later service as Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army,, and Joint commands in the United States and across the globe, I have understood the foundational importance of civilian control of the military; it is one of the things that makes ours the greatest military in history and is a key guarantor of the freedoms and democracy we cherish and have sworn to defend. The authorities of the President and, through the President, the Secretary of Defense are clear in the U.S. Constitution and laws of our Nation, and in the minds of all who serve, civilian and military, in the defense of our Nation. I have come to learn that large organizations will reflect the principles and values of their senior leaders. The chain of command is clear, and if confirmed I will actively ensure in my leadership, words, and actions that civilian control and authority over the Department are understood and followed.

Question. The 2018 National Defense Strategy Commission report observed, “there is an imbalance in civil-military relations on critical issues of strategy development and implementation. Civilian voices appear relatively muted on issues at the center of U.S. defense and national security policy.”

Do you agree with this assessment? If so, specifically what would you do to address this issue, if confirmed?

Answer. I believe in the bedrock American principle of civilian control of the military. Devising the right strategy for our nation’s defense is the very cornerstone of civilian control of the military, and if confirmed, overseeing development of the next iteration of the National Defense Strategy and its implementation will be among my very top priorities. If confirmed, I will ensure DOD’s civilian leadership shepherds this fundamental task, and continues to exercise its necessary authorities and responsibilities for shaping and overseeing U.S. defense policy and strategy, while working closely with the Departments’ military leadership, as well as with Congress.

Question. The National Defense Strategy Commission report also states, “. . . allocating priority—and allocating forces—across theaters of warfare is not solely a military matter. It is an inherently political-military task, decision authority for which is the proper competency and responsibility of America’s civilian leaders.”

If confirmed, specifically how would you exercise your responsibilities in this regard?

Answer. If confirmed, I will rely on empowered civilian leaders across the Office of the Secretary of Defense to advise me on the full range of strategic and policy considerations related to global force management. This includes developing our strategic priorities, aligning resources with these priorities, adjudicating resource tradeoffs between different Combatant Commands, and when appropriate, coordinating with the U.S. Department of State and the National Security Council. This civilian expertise will be critical to informing my decision making on how best to allocate and assign forces in support of our national interests.

Question. What civilian officials and organizations, in your opinion, should participate in decisions regarding allocating priority and forces across operational theaters? If confirmed, how would you ensure the participation of these officials and organizations in such decisions?

Answer. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy—and the team of civilian appointees and civil servants that support this position—play a central role in reviewing DOD posture and global force management decisions to ensure alignment with strategic priorities, policies for bilateral relationships, and congressional and public affairs considerations. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security also play important roles in reviewing global force management decisions.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy is fully empowered to coordinate within DOD and helps lead the implementation of our strategic priorities. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy—or the appropriate official within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy—will review every global force management issue prior to recommendations coming to me for decisions, and I will ensure he has the opportunity to provide counsel directly to me, informed by military assessments.

Question. If confirmed, what lessons would you draw from the tenures of former Secretaries Mattis and Marshall—also recently retired general officers who served as the Secretary of Defense—and how would you apply those lessons to your own service, if confirmed as Secretary of Defense?

Answer. Secretaries Marshall and Mattis conducted themselves with integrity and professionalism. They were public servants and honest leaders. If confirmed, I would conduct myself in the same manner.

I am mindful of the concerns of another retired general leading the Department, and while I am in no position to judge the details of how these two predecessors chose to do it, I can assure you that, if confirmed, I intend to lead in a manner consistent with my belief in the principle of civilian control.

I will empower the OSD staff to lead the policy-making process. I will fill all available civilian positions on that staff, and I will ensure that the orders I give and the decisions I make are properly formed through a blend of civilian and military perspectives.

Military advice will inform but it will not dominate my thinking. Finally, knowing that Congress, too, represents an important element of civilian control, I will consult closely with the Senate and House of Representatives as you execute your oversight responsibilities. I will be forthcoming, responsive and transparent with you.

2018 NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY (NDS)

Question. The 2018 NDS outlines that the United States faces a rising China, an aggressive Russia, and the continued threat from rogue regimes and global terrorism.

In your view, does the 2018 NDS accurately assess the current strategic environment? What do you perceive as the areas of greatest risk?

Answer. I believe the 2018 NDS correctly identifies strategic competitions with China and with Russia as the primary challenges animating the global security environment; however, I believe that because of its ascent and the scope and scale of its military modernization, China is the top priority. I am also concerned about transnational threats as the security landscape evolves (e.g., amid COVID-19) and believe that our defense strategy must adapt accordingly. As required by law, if confirmed I will review the NDS and where necessary revise or update it in the 2022 National Defense Strategy.

The continued erosion of United States military advantage vis-à-vis China and Russia, in key strategic areas, remains the most significant risk the Department must address. If left unchecked, this continued erosion could fundamentally challenge our ability to achieve U.S. national security objectives—and limit DOD's ability to underpin other U.S. instruments of power.

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

Answer. I assess that the rapid development and operational focus of the People's Republic of China (PRC) constitutes a significant and long-term security threat to the United States and to our allies and partners. This threat is an outgrowth of nearly two decades of intense efforts by China to modernize and reform the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and other forces into an increasingly capable joint force able to conduct the full range of military operations across every warfighting domain. In addition to a significant buildup and modernization of its strategic forces, the PLA is advancing its capabilities and concepts for conducting information, cyber, space,

and counterspace operations. China has also made it clear that it expects the PLA to be a global military actor that is able to secure China's growing overseas interests and advance other PRC objectives abroad. These changes are coupled with the PRC's aggressive and at times coercive activities aimed at advancing its military influence through forging closer ties with foreign militaries, attaining overseas military bases, and expanding the PLA's presence worldwide.

Question. If confirmed, would you revise or adjust the 2018 NDS as a result of changes in assumptions, policy, or other factors? If so, in what ways?

Answer. Yes. Many of the core concepts in the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) are fundamentally sound. At the same time, there are notable changes occurring in the global security environment that warrant deeper evaluation, and which should compel DOD to periodically reexamine and update the strategy and its path to implementation. For example, the pace of China's military modernization, its increasingly aggressive actions in the Indo-Pacific and its ability to threaten the United States Homeland are concerning and must be continually reexamined. The NDS also assumes sustained defense budget growth, but that has not fully materialized. The NDS anticipated a global rebalancing of United States commitments, notably from the Middle East to the Indo-Pacific, but that has proven challenging. In light of these developments, if confirmed, I plan to undertake a comprehensive strategic review in consultation with my leadership team to ensure we can achieve our defense objectives.

If confirmed, I would direct my team to evaluate where changes are emerging relative to the U.S. security and fiscal environments; demands on defense-wide and military roles and missions; our military's approach to future warfighting; the state of our network of allies and partners; and the ways DOD is implementing the strategy. Examination of these elements would of course be nested in the broader context of any change in priorities directed in our National Security Strategy. These insights would inform how the Department may update the defense strategy and its implementation.

Question. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you propose to the missions and responsibilities (including geographic boundaries) of the Combatant Commands to implement the 2018 NDS more effectively? Please explain your answer.

Answer. If confirmed, I will review whether the responsibilities of the Combatant Commands align with the Department's priority missions in implementing the defense strategy and, if necessary, work with the Department's senior leadership to revise. It would be my responsibility to recommend to the President roles and missions for Combatant Commanders to ensure there are no seams our adversaries can exploit. That includes boundaries of the Combatant Commands.

Question. Do you see a need to adjust the size, structure, and resources of each Military Service to ensure they are optimized to implement the 2018 NDS and the associated Operation Plans (OPLANs)? Please explain your answer.

Answer. The size, structure, and resources of each Service must be informed by strategy-driven analysis and priorities, a joint understanding of how our military will conduct operations and fight and win the nation's future wars, and a resource-informed pragmatism. In my view, each of the Services has taken important steps to align their force structures and resourcing to 2018 NDS priorities, especially in shifting away from decades of counter-terrorism operations and toward great power competition and warfighting preparedness. If confirmed, I will carefully consider the approaches the Services are taking, individually and as a Joint Force, and working closely with my senior civilian leadership team I, will make appropriate determinations about their preparedness for both today's and future contingencies.

Question. Does DOD have the requisite modeling and simulation capabilities and tools to support you, if confirmed as Secretary of Defense, in assessing whether the Combatant Commanders' OPLANs will achieve the national security objectives identified by the NDS? Please explain your answer.

Answer. It is my understanding that the Department uses a number of modeling and simulation approaches, combined with military exercises, experiments, and wargames to assess the effectiveness of operational plans. If confirmed, I will assure these plans are thoroughly assessed and adjusted if necessary, and that we continue to ensure robust analytic support to the development of current and future operational plans.

Question. Does the DOD have the requisite analytic capabilities and tools to support you, if confirmed as Secretary of Defense, in evaluating the Military Services' force structure and sizing strategies to ensure that each Service can and will generate forces that are manned, trained, and equipped to execute the operational plans associated with the 2018 NDS? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Effectively executing operational plans requires the right forces, in sufficient number and with relevant training, arriving in theater on relevant timelines.

If confirmed, I will assess each Service's force structure to ensure it supports the wide range of missions required to meet the Nation's defense goals. I will also ensure we continue to use all analytic tools at our disposal to assess Service force structure and sizing strategies against the demands of the defense strategy.

Question. Are there significant opportunities that, in your view, DOD has been unable to leverage, or has leveraged only in part, since the NDS was published in 2018? If so, how would correct this situation, if confirmed?

Answer. Our alliances and partnerships globally—including the defense tools at our disposal to engage them, and more fundamentally the mutual security commitments and interests we pursue to maintain them—are an asymmetric strategic advantage that our competitors do not possess. The strength of this network of defense relations cannot be taken for granted, though, especially in global competitions with China and Russia. If confirmed, I would seek ways to build on DOD's alliance and partnership efforts as a core element of defense strategy.

First and foremost, if confirmed, I will make it a priority to rebuild strong defense relationships with our allies and partners around the world, many of whom have felt unsure of U.S. commitments and insufficiently consulted in recent years. In addition to renewing the foundations of our defense relationships, I also understand the Department recently released new guidance to guide efforts to more strategically engage with its network of allies and partners through defense relations, security cooperation, force planning, and elsewhere. If confirmed, I would look to better understand how DOD is framing and implementing this guidance and ensure it is fundamental to broader DOD efforts to review and update defense strategy and its implementation.

Question. Secretary Mattis said that the 2018 National Defense Strategy “establishes my intent to pursue urgent change at significant scale.” Do you share Secretary Mattis' intent for the NDS? In your opinion, where has DOD succeeded in executing the NDS, where has DOD fallen short, and what should be done to exploit successes and correct deficiencies?

Answer. The NDS is the Defense Department's answer to the President's National Security Strategy (NSS); it details the ways and means with which our military will implement the larger national security imperatives our country faces.

My intent, therefore, if confirmed, is to develop an NDS that supports President-elect Biden's NSS and defines how the U.S. military will utilize all its resources to defend the American people.

I expect that such a strategy—in this time of geo-political flux, accelerating competition, transnational threats and extraordinary technological transformation—will entail change, even urgent change, but I view the document's purpose in this larger context.

I believe the Department has taken important steps in beginning to realign Joint Force capabilities and posture to ensure its competitive military edge against China and Russia, including in key strategic regions—but there is yet more work to be done. I believe we need to accelerate the pace and scope of this change, and make tough choices where fiscal, doctrinal, temporal, or other limitations pose trade-offs to implementing the strategy. I also think the Department's challenges in shifting focus from today's global, operational commitments (especially in the Middle East) to future mission demands must be reconciled within the strategy, to ensure its feasible and sustainable implementation. I believe further prioritization, better focus, and synchronization of defense relations, security cooperation, research and development, and force planning are important areas to assess and adjust to advance defense objectives.

Question. 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.

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

Answer. It is critical to ensure a clear linkage between strategic priorities, planning guidance, and resourcing across the Department, including among the Military Services and Combatant Commands. As well, this linkage must be governed by the core principle of civilian control of the military. If confirmed, I am fully committed to supporting DOD's internal strategic guidance processes to ensure that key Departmental functions—in employing, managing, and developing the Joint Force—are informed by strategy-driven, resource-informed defense planning. This planning guidance should apply across the full defense enterprise, and among the full range of force development and planning functions, including programming and resourcing, acquisition, requirements, concept development, and analysis.

DOD READINESS

Question. The United States now faces two near-peer competitors in an aggressively militaristic China and revanchist Russia.

Do you believe that our military forces have greater overall combat potential today than 30 years ago, despite force structure reductions? If so, please explain.

Answer. Yes. Despite force structure reductions over the past 30 years, the Joint Force has the necessary capacity and capability to implement National Defense Strategy (NDS) priorities and contend with today's threats. With congressional support, the Department of Defense will increase the Joint Forces' combat potential by continued investments in joint force readiness and force modernization, along with accelerated investments in artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other advanced technologies. These investments, combined with ally and partner cooperation, will enable optimizing our force structure to generate a combat credible Joint Force capable of deterring or defeating adversaries.

Question. In your view, how do the readiness challenges facing the DOD today and over the next 10 years impact the Department's requirements for force structure investments? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Increased and stable funding over recent budget years has improved the Department's ability to restore military readiness. To sustain our readiness gains, we must balance force structure growth with the need to train, equip, and modernize the Services. If confirmed, I expect to review our continued investments in mobility, logistics, and force protection for Ground Combat Teams; Navy weapons procurement and fleet maintenance; and increased Air Force Ballistic Missile Systems and airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, space, cyber and advanced technologies, to name a few.

Question. If confirmed, how would you balance force structure and readiness demands, particularly with respect to rotational forces in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR), against the imperative to modernize or restructure forces currently in our inventory to meet NDS requirements?

Answer. I believe we can better calibrate United States military presence in the Middle East, and its impacts on the military broadly, to ensure we rebuild the readiness and modernization of the Joint Force as well as provide opportunities to employ the force in other theaters. Historical levels of force commitments to the CENTCOM theater, if sustained over time, will have progressively more negative impacts on force readiness, recapitalization, and the pace and scale of future capability development. The United States should draw on all tools, not just U.S. military force posture, to secure U.S. interests in the CENTCOM theater. Key to this intent will be working by, with, and through our partners in the region. If confirmed, I will review U.S. force presence globally to ensure it is properly balanced with global mission demands and the health of the Joint Force.

Question. Do you assess that the continuing deployment of significant capabilities to the CENTCOM AOR has produced or consumed readiness of U.S. Armed Forces?

Answer. In many cases, yes—the continued deployment of significant capabilities to the CENTCOM AOR or indeed to any operational area consumes some readiness of our forces. That is to be expected. As we build readiness, we must closely monitor the deployment decisions we make today, to assess the impacts those decisions will have on our ability to operate effectively in the future.

Question. Anticipating constant or declining defense budgets going forward, and if confirmed as Secretary of Defense, how would you prioritize the needs for continued readiness, force structure, and modernization?

Answer. Under any resourcing level, the Department must balance readiness, force structure, modernization, and competitive compensation levels while pursuing efficiencies and savings through organizational reform and critical reviews of ongoing missions and activities. If the Department's resourcing levels prove to be relatively "flat" in the coming years, we would need to prioritize modernization of combat-credible forces and deterrent capability, particularly where leveraging advanced technology to ensure the U.S. Joint Force maintains a competitive edge in key domains and warfighting functions, such as in space, 6th generation air power, cyber, undersea warfare, and long-range fires. Doing so under flattening budgets may mean accepting some level of increased risk in the near-term readiness, and greater divestment of legacy force structure, in order to avoid a larger but increasingly obsolete future force.

Question. How would you assess the current readiness of the DOD components across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training to execute OPLANs in support of the 2018 NDS?

Answer. Our Armed Forces are manned, trained, equipped, and ready to answer the nation's call, as the most capable military in the history of the world. If con-

firmed, I look forward to working with the Congress to focus on improving readiness in all facets (Personnel, Equipment/Materiel, and Training) to ensure our forces stand ready to execute Operation/Contingency plans in support of the priorities of the NDS.

Question. What is your assessment of the risk the Military Departments and Services and the Combatant Commands have accepted in regard to their readiness to execute OPLANs in furtherance of the 2018 NDS?

Answer. While I do not have access to all the classified information I would have if confirmed, I believe the Department of Defense has the necessary capability, capacity, and readiness to implement the NDS priorities and contend with today's threats, while minimizing unnecessary risk to our warfighters wherever possible. The threat environment continues to evolve, particularly with respect to China's and Russia's growing abilities to contest United States military advantages. If confirmed, I will assess risk across all domains in an iterative, collective, and collaborative effort, supported by the Military Departments, the Services, and the Combatant Commands.

Question. DOD and Congress have often lacked an adequate understanding of trends in the readiness of the Armed Forces, owing to the difficulty of measuring readiness. This makes it particularly difficult to consider trade-offs among the Military Departments.

If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to improve the Department's definition of specific readiness metrics and the overarching assessment and reporting on readiness trends?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue and reinforce the efforts currently underway to reform how readiness is tracked and reported. This includes the formulation of metrics to convey complex aggregations of data in context, consistent with the way forces are actually employed, that will allow for better management of the current and future force. I will also seek to employ advances in the fields of data science to make our data more strategically informative and help us develop predictive readiness models to anticipate, and ultimately avoid readiness shortfalls.

NATIONAL SECURITY BUDGET

Question. In its 2018 report, the National Defense Strategy Commission recommended that Congress increase the defense budget at an average rate of three to five percent above inflation through the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP). Former Secretaries of Defense Mattis and Esper agreed with that recommendation.

Do you agree with the conclusion of the NDS Commission that sustained real growth in the defense budget is necessary to achieve the aims of the current NDS without incurring significant additional risk?

Answer. Resources are an important part of generating the capability to achieve our national security goals, but that capability also depends on wise planning, leadership, effective training, and other factors. My goal will be to use the resources available to the Department wisely to realize the strategic aims of the Department and ensure the nation has the military capabilities to compete and win. Given the likely budget impact of COVID-19, DOD must be fiscally pragmatic and be prepared for modest growth in the coming years.

Question. If confirmed, by what standards would you measure the adequacy of the defense budget?

Answer. If confirmed, I would measure the adequacy of the Department's funding by our ability to defend this nation—to execute our chosen strategy, maintain the nation's technological edge, preserve the health of the joint force, and provide options to the President that support his foreign policy and defense goals. As part of the framework to measure the sufficiency of our resourcing I would also revisit with the Chairman the way we assess, discuss, measure, and convey risk—a process that is fundamental to informing our recommendations regarding the adequacy of funding.

Question. Many observers have suggested that that the current level of defense spending is not sustainable in the long term given the many priorities the nation faces.

Do you believe the DOD budget request should be based only on strategic considerations or should it also account for fiscal factors unrelated to the NDS? Please explain your answer.

Answer. I believe budgets should match resources to strategic national priorities and must strive to maximize our capabilities. At the same time, budgets for any agency, including DOD, are subject to fiscal realities. That is why it is important to set priorities and make hard choices to preserve and expand the competitive advantage we have against our great power adversaries.

Question. The fiscal year 2022 budget will be the first in a decade debated outside the context of the statutory Budget Control Act (BCA). Defense spending under the Budget Control Act decreased by less than half of the \$1 trillion that had been projected pre-BCA. However, the relationship between absolute spending levels and the stability and certainty of funding availability remains poorly understood.

Acknowledging the need for stable, predictable, and adequate funding, what are your recommendations, if any, for changing the method by which the Department of Defense develops its budgets?

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to strike an appropriate balance in the budget request between the current and future health and requirements of the force. Stability and predictability in funding, which has been lacking during the Budget Control Act era, would certainly help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department in managing its resources.

Question. In your estimation, what do you perceive would be the effect on the ability of the joint force to achieve its objectives, of adding back—in the near future—DOD funding reduced under the Budget Control Act? Could the Department effectively and efficiently execute such resources?

Answer. Realistically, the lost buying power associated with BCA reductions is lost. Moving forward, if confirmed, my immediate aim would be to balance the competing demands of carrying out the strategic objectives established by the President, while maintaining and strengthening our military in order to adapt to changing threats.

The Department would always seek to wisely apply additional resources. If confirmed, my priorities would include increasing the readiness of our force, and ensuring its effective employment in accomplishing the missions directed by the Commander-in-Chief. Both the executive and legislative branches must strive to gain the greatest possible return to our national security for every tax dollar invested, whether that is in the Department of Defense or in other elements of our national power.

Question. Many observers assert that the only way to force DOD leaders to make the “hard choices” to divest of lower priority or underperforming programs, is to constrain the Department fiscally.

Do you believe that this approach leads to more effective and efficient decision-making by DOD leaders?

Answer. There will always be fiscal constraints. Given the fragile state of our economy and the large deficits required to combat the impact of COVID, I expect fiscal pressure going forward. Despite such pressures, both the Department and the Congress have struggled at times with divesting legacy or lower priority programs to make way for important new investments. Given the scope of the challenges we face, Congress and the Department will need to work together to make some hard choices.

Question. In your view, what are the effects of the BCA and headquarters cuts on the ability of the Office of the Secretary of Defense to make policy for, and oversee policy implementation across, all components of the Department of Defense?

Answer. The mandatory headquarters cuts undertaken over the past decade have effectively cut the OSD civilian workforce by 25 percent. The fiscal year 2021 congressional marks will further shrink OSD’s professional staff. This significant reduction has degraded the organization’s ability to pursue effective policy-implementation for the expansive national security mission. Sustained cuts have narrowed OSD’s hiring pipeline, weakening the organization’s ability to compete for talented recent graduates. It has also challenged OSD’s ability to bring diverse perspectives to recommended defense policies. If confirmed, I will direct a review of current staffing levels to determine the billets and resources we need to maintain a sufficiently sized professional civilian staff in OSD relative to our national security mission sets. If I determine that a lack of billets or funding for civilian pay is hindering the ability of OSD to make policy and oversee policy implementation across the Department, I will identify to Congress any additional unfunded requirements identified during my review.

The Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) process has remained fundamentally unchanged since its inception more than half a century ago.

Question. Do you believe the PPBE process results in the proper allocation of resources according to the strategic priorities at the Department of Defense?

Answer. It is my understanding that the PPBE process provides an effective, neutral, and open framework to allow the leadership of the Department, including the Secretary, to make well-informed choices about resource allocation in support of the Department’s strategic priorities. I am committed to ensuring this process works effectively and, if confirmed, will seek to make any necessary adjustments to meet the nation’s defense needs.

Question. What changes would you make, if any, to the PPBE process to improve both resourcing decisions within DOD and information flow about those decisions to the Congress?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work in partnership with the Deputy Secretary of Defense and other Department leaders to ensure that the PPBE process is effective in aligning resources to the defense strategy. This includes identifying analytically-informed strategic choices about the size and shape of the future force. Effective communication with Congress is critical to ensuring our nation's defense needs are met. If confirmed, I will review the Department's communication process with the intent to ensure information flow to the Congress is both timely and effective.

I understand the Congress directed the Department, in the newly-enacted Department of Defense Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2021 to enhance the capabilities of the budget liaison offices in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) and the services. That initiative will be an important part of ensuring an effective communication flow regarding the budget.

Question. In recent years, several observers have asserted that relative detachment of the combatant commanders from the PPBE process results in inadequate treatment of combatant commander priorities.

If confirmed, do you believe that the PPBE process could be improved to more accurately reflect the resourcing requirements of the combatant commands, especially for joint requirements that are not high priorities for the individual military departments? If so, how?

Answer. Having served as both a combatant commander and as a service vice chief, I understand the different needs and perspectives each brings to the PPBE debates inside the Department. Assessing and resourcing the requirements of the Combatant Commands is a critical component of the PPBE process. It is my understanding that these requirements are currently integrated via multiple channels in the PPBE process and assessed based on their ability to meet the Department's defense goals. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that Combatant Command needs are fully and fairly reviewed as the Department builds its input to the President's Budget.

If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring Combatant Command needs are fully assessed as the Department builds its input to the President's Budget and will leverage existing PPBE inputs, such as Integrated Priority Lists to properly understand the resourcing requirements of the combatant commands. I will also rely on the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for advice on the priority of joint requirements.

Question. Former Secretary of Defense Mattis stated, "If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition."

What are your views on the role of the State Department and other non-DOD departments and agencies in achieving U.S. national security objectives?

Answer. Based on my 40 years of experience, I firmly believe that contributions of non-DOD departments and agencies are fundamental to achieving U.S. national security objectives. I believe there are few national security issues that can be properly addressed by only one agency of the government. Most require some level of interagency cooperation, and in my view, our diplomats should be in the lead for issues related to America's interests around the world. The Department of Defense should not and cannot alone address the many complex security challenges confronting this Nation. The military must at all times work in concert with all elements of national power—including diplomatic, economic, and intelligence activities—as part of a whole-of-government effort to address threats to the Homeland, our allies and partners, and our interests abroad. The Department of Defense should eagerly support diplomatic efforts to establish and maintain a peace, to persuade and convince recalcitrant leaders, and to advance our goals for regional security and stability. The use of military force should be a last resort after alternatives have been exhausted. If confirmed, I will work very closely with my interagency counterparts to ensure the Department of Defense is always nested within a broader U.S. Government approach.

Question. Do you believe non-DOD departments and agencies have been sufficiently resourced to appropriately contribute to U.S. national security objectives?

Answer. It is imperative that non-DOD departments and agencies receive sufficient funding to be able to contribute their respective parts in addressing the complex array of security challenges confronting this Nation. I do not believe current funding levels for security assistance and development programs are pacing the challenges posed by China and others in these areas. The Department of Defense alone cannot shoulder this burden—the Department's success requires its interagency partners to be resourced sufficiently. Each department and agency leader must act with responsible fiscal stewardship as he or she sets resource requirements

for respective missions in the context of the overall National Security Strategy. If confirmed, I would look to these leaders to determine the appropriate resource levels for their departments and agencies and would partner with them to advocate for sufficient funding.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Question. In accordance with title 10, U.S. Code, the President and Secretary of Defense exercise authority, direction, and control of the Armed Forces through two distinct branches of the chain of command. One branch runs from the President, through the Secretary of Defense, to the combatant commanders for the execution of missions with forces assigned to their commands. For purposes of organizing, training, and equipping forces, the chain of command runs from the President, to the Secretary of Defense, to the Secretaries of the Military Departments.

Do you believe this dual structure provides for clear and effective chain of command?

Answer. Yes, I do. I have worked in this dual structure at both Military Service and Joint commands, and believe it is both effective and clearly understood throughout the Department.

Question. How could the effectiveness of each branch of the chain of command be improved, in your view?

Answer. I have no specific recommendations to offer at this time. If confirmed, I will continuously consider the need for improvement to our chains of command, and will recommend them to the President and Congress as warranted.

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Question. Section 921 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2017 made changes to Section 151 of Title 10, U. S. Code, concerning the role of the Joint Chiefs as military advisors to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

What is your assessment of the authorities and processes by which the Joint Chiefs provide military advice and opinions to the President, and the Secretary of Defense? What changes, if any, do you assess are required?

Answer. I believe the authorities and processes established in 10 U.S.C. § 151, as enhanced by the Fiscal Year 2017 NDAA, are sufficient because they grant clear authority and responsibility to the Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide military advice and opinions to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

I don't believe changes are required at this time.

Question. What is your level of confidence that these authorities and processes will provide you, if confirmed as the Secretary of Defense, the best military advice, including "minority opinions" that may diverge from those of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs or the majority of members of the Joint Chiefs?

Answer. I am highly confident that, if confirmed, the current process will provide me with military advice. I am equally confident the authorities and processes in 10 U.S.C. § 151 ensure that when the advice or opinion of another member of the Joint Chiefs differs from that of the Chairman, the information will be provided to me, along with the reasoning behind the differences.

Question. If confirmed, both the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff would share the experience of having served as general officers in the U.S. Army. Under these circumstances, how would you ensure that the President benefits from the diversity of opinion and expertise required to optimally address tough national security problems?

Answer. I will work with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs to ensure that the opinions and perspectives of the Joint Chiefs—particularly if they differ from his or my own—are presented to the President and get a full airing.

Question. Do you commit, if confirmed, to always provide your best advice to the President, even when your advice and opinions might differ from those of other members of the Cabinet, the President's other senior advisors, or from the President's own views?

Answer. I do.

CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE JOINT STAFF

Question. Section 151 of title 10, U.S. Code, provides that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal military adviser to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. Pursuant to Section 163(a) of title 10, the President has directed that communications between the President or the Secretary of Defense and the commanders of the

combatant commands be transmitted through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

If confirmed, how would you structure your relationship with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I will respect the independence of the Chairman, as stipulated in title 10, to provide his military advice to me and to the Commander-in-Chief. I will, of course, consult with the Chairman and the Joint Chiefs as I develop U.S. defense policy and issue orders to the Joint Force. This will, I expect, require constant and frequent personal interaction with them.

Question. If confirmed, would you modify the current duties and responsibilities of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in any way? Are there any other duties and responsibilities you would consider assigning or delegating to the Chairman?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to lead the policy-making process through the statutory structure of the OSD staff, and I intend to execute my duties in the military chain of command—including the issuance of operational orders—with the full benefit of the advice and counsel of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Combatant Commanders. I do not believe that performing these duties requires any modifications to the current duties and responsibilities of the Chairman.

I do not envision any such changes at this time.

Question. If confirmed, what timeline would you assess to be appropriate for the Department's development, programming, and implementation of the joint operating concepts required by the NDS?

Answer. I understand that the Department is working on development of a Joint Warfighting Concept, with a first iteration due this spring. If confirmed, I will review the progress to date on this effort, to include the independent assessments of it, to determine what follow-on concept work is needed to ensure a strategy-driven and joint approach to future warfighting, and identify a timeline that ensures the overall concept is backed by solid analysis and can usefully inform future joint and Service capability investments.

Question. In your view, is the Joint Staff appropriately structured, resourced, and experienced to adjudicate competing interests among combatant commands if the U.S. became engaged in significant combat operations against a strategic competitor? If not, what organization do you believe should make decisions about the strategic tradeoffs required in such a situation?

Answer. Yes. The Joint Staff is trained and capable to present what would be a surge of competing requests before and during significant combat operations. The process of gathering risk, to both mission and force, and to present a strategic picture of associated tradeoffs is a core competency of the Joint Staff.

USE OF MILITARY FORCE

Question. If confirmed, what factors would you consider in making recommendations to the President on the use of military force?

Answer. The decision to use military force is one of the most consequential decisions a President can make. In evaluating whether to recommend the use of military force, I would consider a number of factors, including: the nature of the threat and vital national interests at stake; whether the United States would be acting alone or with others; the risk to force and to mission; whether the proposed action complies with applicable domestic and international law, including the principles of necessity and proportionality; whether there is a defined and achievable military end-state; and whether non-military means that could sufficiently address the threat have been exhausted.

Question. In your view, is a "new" Authorization for the Use of Military Force needed at this time? Please explain your answer.

Answer. If confirmed, I will review current congressional Authorizations for Use of Military Force with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and provide the President with my recommendations.

Question. What factors would you consider, if confirmed, in determining which forces of other nations are eligible for collective self-defense by U.S. Forces, and under what conditions? What limitations, if any, would you seek to impose on the provision of collective self-defense by U.S. Forces?

Answer. It is fundamental that the United States stands by our partners and allies. When U.S. Forces have the authority to protect our partners from attack or imminent threat of attack, it can: help achieve mission objectives; bolster the protection of U.S. Forces and facilities operating abroad; help maintain the resolve of partners that U.S. Forces work by, with, and through to address mutual threats; and ensure the United States furthers important national interests, including its com-

mitments in mutual defense agreements. If confirmed, I would consider these and other factors in assessing whether U.S. Forces should be authorized to defend particular foreign partner forces.

Rules of engagement authorizing U.S. Forces to defend foreign partner forces should clearly identify the particular partners eligible for such protection and whether any limits exist on the groups or individuals against which such force may be used. Any use of force in defense of foreign partner forces must also be necessary and proportionate to address the particular hostile act or demonstration of hostile intent.

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

Answer. The Commander-in-Chief always remains at the top of the chain of command, and the U.S. military operates under U.S. control. Military capabilities may, at times, need to be made temporarily available to support an activity of a department or agency other than the Department of Defense. Under such circumstances it may be appropriate for the head of another department or agency to direct operations while working with the Secretary of Defense. Further, U.S. military personnel are always subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Question. What is your understanding and assessment of the authorities and agreements in place to permit U.S. military personnel to carry out missions under the provisions of title 50, U.S. Code? If confirmed, how would you modify these agreements or authorities, if at all?

Answer. I understand that the necessary framework is in place for U.S. military personnel to conduct and support the activities of the Department of Defense and other U.S. Government departments and agencies when called upon by the President or Secretary of Defense as the situation may require. I believe that the current framework is sufficient.

If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to work within the Department and with colleagues in other U.S. Government departments and agencies to adjust existing arrangements as the need arises.

Question. According to the 2018 NDS, Dynamic Force Employment (DFE) will allow for the more “flexibl[e] use [of] ready forces to shape proactively the strategic environment while maintaining readiness to respond to contingencies and ensure long-term warfighting readiness.”

In your view, have past DFE operations had the desired effect in “shaping the strategic environment”? Please explain your answer.

Answer. By providing a more flexible mechanism to employ forces, DFE allows Commanders to capitalize on strategic opportunities to employ forces without a significant loss to readiness. A critical component of DFE is requiring Combatant Commands to assess how successfully a past DFE operation impacted the strategic environment.

Question. In your view, have past DFE operations promoted, strained, or degraded the long-term readiness of U.S. Forces?

Answer. In fiscal year 2020, DFE operations likely promoted, or at least maintained, overall U.S. Force readiness. Forces that deploy in support of DFE operations maintain their combat readiness, while gaining valuable experience, and shape the strategic environment.

Question. If confirmed as the Secretary of Defense, what factors would you consider in authorizing the use of particular forces to execute a DFE mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I would consider the Combatant Command’s justification for the requested unit (if specifically requested) or capability and how its employment meets national strategic objectives, as well as the requested unit’s readiness, previous recent DFE operations, and a summary of costs for comparison to other DFE unit candidates.

ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Question. The 2018 NDS stresses that mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships are crucial to U.S. success in competition with, deterrence of, and potential conflict against long term strategic competitors.

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

Answer. The United States’ global network of alliances and partnerships is a strategic advantage our competitors cannot match, but it is one that has been undermined in recent years due to inconsistent statements about U.S. commitments, seemingly erratic decision making, and insufficient consultation on important

issues. If we take our allies for granted, we squander our greatest strategic asset; we must rebuild and modernize our alliances and partnerships. By working together with allies and partners and aligning our defense priorities, the United States has the best chance to protect its security interests, by maintaining favorable balances of power that deter aggression, support stability, and favor democratic values and economic growth. If confirmed, I will take steps to mend and strengthen this critical advantage.

If confirmed, I will make it a priority to rebuild strong defense relationships with our allies and partners around the world. I would direct the Department to pursue tangible, sustainable measures to strengthen and modernize our alliances and partnerships in ways that bolster our ability to deter aggression, and if necessary, fight and win as interoperable coalitions. More broadly, I would seek to ensure the Department, in concert with U.S. interagency partners, is able to engage more comprehensively with ally and partner security establishments, to act decisively to meet shared security challenges. I believe the Department should focus on strengthening its defense relationships based on a foundation of mutual respect, responsibility, shared priorities, and mutual accountability.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I expect to focus my attention on engaging with key allies and partners, focusing DOD efforts on strengthening collaborative planning, and increasing interoperability. I would strive to align the Department's priorities and synchronize the employment of the Department's security cooperation resources to help allies and partners develop their defense establishments and military forces. Also, if confirmed, I would confer with my staff in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and geographic Combatant Commanders on how best to enhance their efforts to strengthen defense relationships in their areas of responsibility, consistent with the strategic priorities I identify.

Question. If confirmed, on which leaders and forums would you focus your engagement, with a view to advancing most effectively U.S. national security interests?

Answer. If confirmed, I would prioritize engaging leaders and forums most relevant to U.S. interests, especially as articulated in the National Defense Strategy and the Guidance on Development of Allies and Partners. I would rely on my team in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy for recommendations on timing and specifics of these engagements.

U.S. AFRICA COMMAND (AFRICOM)

Question. AFRICOM has minimal assigned forces and, as a result, is required to compete for the vast majority of its U.S. Forces in the global force management process.

What is your assessment of the availability and predictability of forces and associated capabilities to support the AFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan, the NDS, and other emergency requirements?

Answer. The approach to work by, with, and through United States partners to achieve security and stability in Africa has been effective with a limited forward presence. This includes using the full breadth of our title 10, chapter 16, security cooperation authorities to enable our African partners. Key to this approach is also DOD's strategic focus on building African partner nation institutions and capabilities while supporting efforts of other international partners with an interest in facilitating security and stability on the continent. However, I have not seen the full posture laydown, and if confirmed, I will conduct a global force posture review to ensure our posture is in line with our strategy. That will include examining the impact of the Trump Administration's redeployment of forces from Somalia.

Question. Are there any changes you would implement to the allocation or assignment of forces to AFRICOM, if confirmed?

Answer. DOD assets have been allocated based on the priorities set out in the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS), and my understanding is that the Department's fiscal year 2021 allocations for AFRICOM are aligned with that strategy. If confirmed, I will consider the Combatant Commander's requirements and requests for forces, and assess risk, based on changes in the strategic environment and the direction provided in the national security and defense strategies.

Question. What should be the primary objectives of the DOD specifically, and the United States more broadly, in the AFRICOM AOR?

Answer. DOD's priorities in Africa are countering 1) violent extremist organizations (VEOs) that threaten the Homeland and United States national security interests and 2) competitors such as China and Russia. The Department's activities in

the AFRICOM AOR contribute to the whole-of-government effort to combat transnational threats to U.S. national security interests. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department works closely with other U.S. Departments and agencies to properly align its efforts with other agencies that are advancing lasting peace and security on the continent. I will also coordinate, as appropriate, with our allies and partners to achieve our national security objectives.

Question. What is your assessment of United States counterterrorism strategies in the AFRICOM AOR, particularly those in East Africa, North Africa, and the Sahel? If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you propose to these strategies?

Answer. My understanding is that the current strategy is to disrupt and degrade priority threats to the U.S. Homeland, our interests, and our allies and partners. A key element in the Department's approach is collaborating with our allies and partners on areas of shared interest, which is an area where we can improve. Across East Africa, the Sahel, and North Africa, a whole-of-government approach to address the drivers of extremism will remain a central pillar of our strategy. If confirmed, I will assess our counterterrorism strategies both in the AFRICOM AOR and more broadly.

Given the threat posed by terrorist organizations in Africa, the Department would continue to prioritize degrading and disrupting the al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates that pose direct threats to the United States Homeland and U.S. personnel. If confirmed, I will prioritize collaborating with and enabling partners to combat shared threats so that, over time, the majority of the effort and resourcing shifts to partners and/or multilateral efforts.

Question. What is your assessment of the strategic objectives of Russia and China in Africa? In what areas, if any, do these oppose U.S. and partner objectives?

Answer. Over the past five years, Russia has increased its engagement with African nations to bolster global power projection, access raw materials, expand arms sales, and undermine Western influence. Russia views investment in Africa as part of its global influence strategy. China's strategic objectives in Africa include securing access to economic resources, opening new markets, and gaining operational military experience through peacekeeping and counter-piracy operations, while portraying it as a responsible global actor. I am also concerned about China and Russia's overseas military basing ambitions and the PLA's expanding global military presence. The PRC has a well-established air and naval base in Djibouti, which they continue to expand, and is also looking for other African basing locations including along the Atlantic coast. China also uses multilateral forums and international organizations like the Belt and Road Forum to generate new opportunities to strengthen its political influence, promote strategic messaging that portrays it as a responsible global actor, advance its development interests, and limit outside interference in and criticism of its initiatives.

Given Africa's diverse political, economic, social, and security landscape, it is difficult to generalize how Russia and China "oppose partner objectives." However, we have seen how heavy-handed Russian private military companies' operations in Mozambique, Central African Republic, and Libya have exacerbated local tensions and alienated members of the public. These actions undermine our efforts in African countries to promote civilian control of the Armed Forces, transparency, and accountability.

Question. What is your assessment of the efficacy of the current United States strategy to compete against Russia and China and to be the security partner of choice in Africa? What changes, if any, would you recommend in this strategy, if confirmed?

Answer. The current United States strategy focuses on African partnerships—building capacity, working toward shared objectives, operating transparently, and promoting institutions and good governance for sustainable security—while highlighting and exposing the dangers associated with dealing with China and Russia. DOD's competitive security edge lies primarily in (1) the superior quality of the equipment, training, education, and other security assistance we provide; and (2) our support to counterterrorism operations. In the face of motivated and capable competitors, we must work to enhance our ability not only to compete, but to win. This means continuing our whole-of-government commitment to stay engaged and develop partnerships and address mutual security concerns in Africa, which will critically involve other agencies strengthening their non-military tools.

The Department has made notable progress implementing the National Defense Strategy to advance our lines of effort to compete with Russia and China in Africa. This includes enhancing our alliances and partnerships in Africa through efforts like the signing of the 10-year Roadmaps for Defense Cooperation with Morocco and Tunisia. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing and advancing our strategies to protect and secure United States interests in Africa.

Question. The redacted report of the Army's investigation into the 2017 incident in Niger found "... several problems with the advise, assist, and accompany activity. Exercised conservatively, with advisors remaining far from the fight, advising higher echelon commanders, [activities] could be executed in accordance with Presidential Policy. Exercised aggressively, with [accompanying] U.S. advisors ... the direct actions of our partners cannot be distinguished from U.S. direct action. U.S. provision of 'advice and assistance' looks more like U.S. direct combat operations that are not reported that way to Congress ..."

In light of these findings, if confirmed, how would ensure that advise, assist, and accompany activities are executed in a manner consistent with Presidential Policy and are reported in a timely manner to Congress, as mandated by law and policy?

Answer. I understand that over the last year, DOD has reviewed the training Special Operations Forces Soldiers receive and that they provide to partner forces, which reinforces their proper roles as foreign partner advisors during counterterrorism operations. By incorporating lessons learned from the Niger ambush across all Service Components, USSOCOM has ensured that SOF operators have an understanding of the expectations and limitations of working "by, with, and through" partner forces. Furthermore, the Department honors its congressional reporting requirements and remains committed to fulfilling the responsibilities and requirements as mandated by law and policy. If confirmed, I will be committed to providing the committees with timely, appropriate, and sufficiently detailed information, consistent with congressional direction.

Question. In light of these findings, if confirmed, how would you seek to clarify the roles and policies governing U.S. advisory efforts, particularly in support of partners operating outside areas of active hostilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that any limitations on the role of U.S. advisory efforts, particularly in support of partners in locations where U.S. Forces do not have authority to conduct direct action, are communicated clearly and implemented in a disciplined manner, as needed.

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND (CENTCOM)

Question. In your opinion, to what extent does achieving United States national security interests in the Middle East require a continuous United States military presence, and in your view is the current U.S. Force presence appropriately sized? Please explain your answer.

Answer. The Middle East remains critical to our national security interests. It is important for the Department to review its military posture in the Middle East to ensure we are prepared to defend against threats to the Homeland and respond to contingencies, without compromising focus on our global strategy and military readiness. Our posture also provides opportunities for security cooperation with our partners in the region, as we seek to strengthen their military capabilities and build interoperability to meet our shared objectives. If confirmed, I will review our force posture in the Middle East to ensure it is properly balanced with global requirements and the health of the joint force.

Question. What opportunities exist for increasing burden-sharing with U.S. partners to counter threats emanating from and affecting the CENTCOM AOR?

Answer. Given global threats and the U.S. role in the world, burden-sharing with our partners and allies must be a central element in the Department's approach in the Middle East. As our partners continue to expand their defense capabilities, we should explore greater opportunities to work by, with, and through them to address mutual threats. The Department of State and the Department of Defense should work together in this effort, as we seek more partners who share our values to bear the collective burden of international security, while also accounting for good governance and human rights principles through training and institutional capacity building. There are already strong examples of this, such as the International Maritime Construct to secure freedom of navigation in the region, the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, as well as NATO, which I understand is now assuming a direct and expanding role in supporting Iraqi Security Forces and continuing its important role in Afghanistan.

Question. What threat does increased Chinese and Russian involvement in the Middle East pose to United States operations and interests and to what extent does a continuous U.S. presence counter their involvement? In your view, what other policy tools might be useful in this regard?

Answer. China and Russia seek to expand their influence in the Middle East and are increasingly using defense sales to try to drive a wedge between us and our long-time partners. Russia, in particular, seeks to reshape Middle East security structures and expand its regional influence by exploiting vacuums of governance

and creating frozen conflicts to increase Russian leverage and influence, unconstrained by respect for international rules and norms. Chinese economic activity and technology transfers—coupled with a corresponding but as yet smaller expansion of its military footprint and collection capabilities—is growing Chinese influence across the region. The Chinese seek to apply their economic power to exploit weakened or failing economies in the Middle East. These actions put U.S. influence—military, diplomatic, and economic—at risk. If confirmed, I will review our force presence to ensure it is properly balanced to address the broad range of challenges in the Middle East—including from China and Russia—with global requirements and the health of the joint force.

Afghanistan

Question. What are the current United States national security objectives in Afghanistan, and what is your understanding of the current strategy to achieve them?

Answer. President-elect Biden has pledged to bring the war in Afghanistan to a responsible end. In doing so, the focus will be on ensuring that terrorist groups—al Qaeda and the Islamic State Khorasan Province—are not allowed to threaten our Homeland again. The incoming Administration will support the peace process between the Afghan Government and the Taliban with a high-level, robust diplomatic effort. That effort will aim to help the Afghan Government and the Taliban reach a durable political settlement and a ceasefire. If confirmed, I will look closely at the current and future United States military footprint in Afghanistan. In the near-term, if confirmed, I will work with the President-elect to ensure that our forces have the ability to continue their core missions of counterterrorism, and support for Afghan forces effectively and safely.

Question. If confirmed, what changes to the United States military strategy in Afghanistan would you recommend?

Answer. Before making any recommendations about the United States military strategy in Afghanistan, if confirmed, I will seek the advice of Office of the Secretary of Defense experts, United States military leadership, and our Resolute Support coalition partners to assess the military campaign in Afghanistan and its role in supporting Department of State-led efforts to end the war on terms favorable to the United States. Changes in the U.S. military strategy should complement and support diplomatic efforts.

Question. In your view, should United States troop levels in Afghanistan be tied to the achievement of conditions on the ground? If so, what specific conditions do you believe to be prerequisite to reducing or eliminating U.S. military presence there?

Answer. I believe troop levels should always be commensurate with the strategy we are executing and to the achievement of our national security goals. If confirmed, I will seek the advice of Office of the Secretary of Defense experts, U.S. military leadership, and our Resolute Support coalition partners to assess the military campaign in Afghanistan and its role in supporting Department of State-led efforts to end the war on terms favorable to the United States. I take seriously the concerns senior military officials have expressed about the Taliban and current levels of violence in Afghanistan. I also understand from discussions during the transition that at current troop levels, we are able to conduct our core missions of counterterrorism and support to Afghan security forces.

I believe troop levels should always be commensurate with the strategy we are executing and to the achievement of our national security goals. If confirmed, I will seek the advice of Office of the Secretary of Defense experts, U.S. military leadership, and our Resolute Support coalition partners to assess the military campaign in Afghanistan and its role in supporting Department of State-led efforts to end the war on terms favorable to the United States.

Question. What is your understanding of Taliban fulfillment of their commitments under the February 2020 United States-Taliban Agreement to date?

Answer. My understanding is that the Taliban's continued participation in Afghanistan Peace Negotiations helps to fulfill a key element of the United States-Taliban Agreement. I understand that the Taliban have also made specific commitments regarding counterterrorism, including to break ties with al Qaeda, and reducing violence. Violence levels have been far too high throughout the ongoing peace process. If confirmed, I intend to consult with interagency stakeholders to review the Taliban's actions relative to all its commitments.

Question. What changes in United States force posture, if any, would you recommend to prepare for the potential that the Taliban fail to meet their commitments by the May 2021 deadline outlined in the Agreement?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure the United States retains all options for changes in United States force posture, depending on an evaluation of the Afghan

Peace Negotiations and United States national security objectives in Afghanistan. I will work with Congress to ensure that the United States military and our Afghan partners have the capacity and capability necessary to protect United States personnel, our allies and partners, and our interests.

Question. Given the failure to meet the authorized force level of 352,000, are current target end strengths for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) achievable, in your assessment?

Answer. My understanding is that the 352,000 force level is the maximum number of ANDSF personnel that the international community has committed to fund. I also understand the ANDSF end strength has remained between 85 and 90 percent of this ceiling for several years because of high casualty rates and challenges with recruiting and retention. I understand that maintaining the authorized force level at 352,000 is important to allow DOD and the Afghan Government the flexibility to reconfigure forces, such as absorbing personnel from the recently disbanded Afghan Local Police, which as I recall were not part of the 352,000 force level. If confirmed, I will review the ANDSF Plan of Record to ensure the ANDSF force structure is sufficient to meet shared objectives.

Question. In your view, do current Afghan security forces have the capability and capacity to project security and stability throughout Afghanistan in 2021 and beyond with United States and international financial and advisory support. The Afghan Air Force and Afghan Special Security Forces have proven particularly effective but still rely on certain international assistance.

Answer. My understanding is that Afghan security forces have the capability and capacity to project security and stability in Afghanistan in 2021 and beyond with United States and international financial and advisory support. The Afghan Air Force and Afghan Special Security Forces have proven particularly effective but still rely on certain international assistance.

If confirmed, I will review what adjustments may be required to develop and sustain the ANDSF through the ANDSF Plan of Record as conditions evolve.

Question. In your view, what role should DOD play in supporting intra-Afghan negotiations?

Answer. DOD should continue to support Department of State-led efforts in support of Afghanistan Peace Negotiations, particularly on matters related to the security of Afghanistan.

Question. In your view, what should be the role of Afghanistan's neighbors—Pakistan, in particular—in this negotiation process?

Answer. Pakistan is an essential partner in any peace process in Afghanistan. If confirmed, I will encourage a regional approach that garners support from neighbors like Pakistan, while also deterring regional actors, from serving as spoilers to the Afghanistan peace process.

Question. In your opinion, what is the role of the Taliban with regard to counterterrorism efforts against ISIS? Against al Qaeda?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Taliban committed in the February 29, 2020 agreement with the United States to prevent any group from using the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and our allies. This includes ISIS-Khorasan, which maintains a presence in Afghanistan. The Taliban must live up to its commitments. Regardless of Taliban actions, the United States should protect itself from terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan and should reserve the right to take any action necessary to ensure its security.

The Taliban have longstanding ties to al Qaeda. The Taliban have agreed to take concrete steps to ensure that al Qaeda never again is able to use Afghanistan's soil to threaten the security of the United States or our allies. If confirmed, I will review the Taliban's progress toward implementing their commitments with regard to al Qaeda.

Pakistan

Question. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to United States relations with Pakistan, particularly in regard to security assistance programs, including International Military Education and Training?

Answer. If confirmed, I will focus on our shared interests which include training future Pakistan military leaders through the use of International Military Education and Training funds. Pakistan will play an important role in any political settlement in Afghanistan. We also need to work with Pakistan to defeat al Qaeda and the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) and to enhance regional stability.

Question. Have you perceived any change in Pakistan's cooperation with the United States since the United States decision to withhold security assistance to Pakistan in September 2018?

Answer. I understand Pakistan has taken constructive steps to meet United States requests in support of the Afghanistan peace process. Pakistan has also

taken steps against anti-Indian groups, such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, although this progress is incomplete. Many factors in addition to the security assistance suspension may impact Pakistan's cooperation, including Afghanistan negotiations and the dangerous escalation following the Pulwama terrorist attack.

Question. In your view, what tools and options are available to the United States to ensure that Pakistan is not used as a sanctuary for militants and violent extremist organizations (VEOs)?

Answer. Pakistan is a sovereign nation. If confirmed, I will press Pakistan to prevent its territory from being used as a sanctuary for militants and violent extremist organizations. Continuing to build relationships with Pakistan's military will provide openings for the United States and Pakistan to cooperate on key issues.

Syria and Iraq

Question. What is your understanding of current United States strategy and objectives in Syria?

Answer. It is my understanding that the military mission in Syria is to enable the enduring defeat of ISIS and that the broader objective of United States Government policy is a peaceful resolution to the Syrian conflict in line with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2254.

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

Answer. It is in our interest that local partners have the capacity and capability to counter ISIS' efforts to regain territory and acquire resources and revenue. It is also in our interest to enable DOD's interagency partners to address the underlying political, economic, and social grievances that ISIS seeks to exploit. If confirmed, I will review the progress to date, develop options, and provide my recommendations to the President.

The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) play a critical role in countering ISIS and al Qaeda. It is my understanding that United States and Coalition forces have been working to develop the capacity of these local partner forces and are now focused on enabling the ISF and SDF to conduct successful counter-ISIS operations independently.

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

Answer. The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) play a critical role in countering ISIS and al Qaeda. It is my understanding that United States and Coalition forces have been working to develop the capacity of these local partner forces and are now focused on enabling the ISF and SDF to conduct successful counter-ISIS operations independently.

Question. In your view, should United States troop levels in Syria be tied to the achievement of certain conditions on the ground? If so, what conditions would you factor into your recommendation to the President on future troop levels in Syria?

Answer. I understand the Department of Defense mission in Syria is to enable the enduring defeat of ISIS. The capacity of local partner forces to thwart ISIS's effort to regain territory and acquire resources and revenue independently over the long term is a critical condition. If confirmed, I will evaluate our strategy and conditions for progress in Syria.

U.S. Force levels are determined by the requisite capabilities to achieve the directed mission, including force protection requirements based on the threat and risk assessment. With a variety of forces operating in a complex environment, those threat and risk perceptions may fluctuate. If confirmed, I will review DOD's strategy, capabilities, and conditions in Syria, and provide my recommendations to the President.

Question. In your view, do United States troops in Syria help "push back" on Russian and Iranian influence in the Middle East? What do you perceive to be the risks and benefits, if any, of such U.S. presence?

Answer. I understand the Department of Defense (DOD) mission in Syria is to enable the enduring defeat of ISIS. With the confluence of numerous actors in the region, it is important that all militaries conduct themselves in a professional manner and that we de-conflict our movements to ensure our forces are protected.

Unless pressure is maintained against ISIS, its re-emergence remains a real possibility. United States and Coalition forces operate by, with, and through local partner forces to achieve the enduring defeat of ISIS. The Defeat-ISIS campaign in Syria is made more complex by the presence of other threats and destabilizing forces in the region beyond ISIS and al Qaeda, including Russian, Iranian, and other pro-Syrian regime forces, as well as the need to balance our relationship with Turkey.

Question. What is your understanding of the current United States strategy and objectives in Iraq?

Answer. I remain concerned about the threat ISIS poses inside Iraq and beyond. I support maintaining a small number of United States troops to carry out a limited mission focused on advising and assisting Iraqi counter-terrorism forces to deal with the continuing threat from ISIS so that it cannot reemerge to again threaten the American people or our partners. Beyond the safety of our own people, this is our priority security mission in Iraq. The United States is in Iraq by invitation, to help Iraqis prevent the reemergence of ISIS. We will work with the Iraqi Government to ensure that the United States military presence and its activities are respectful of Iraq's sovereignty.

Iran

Question. What is your understanding of the objectives of the United States security strategy with respect to Iran? What is the role of the U.S. military in this strategy?

Answer. I understand that the United States security strategy for Iran aims to ensure that Iran cannot acquire a nuclear weapon; protect our citizens, personnel and interests from Iranian threats; counter Iran's destabilizing activity through diplomacy and deterrence and by working closely with our allies and regional partners; and more broadly preserve unity of effort among allies and partners in the Middle East.

The Department of Defense plays a supporting role in the United States Iran strategy by focusing on deterring and, if necessary, defending against the military threats posed by Iran to our personnel and national interests, while broadly supporting regional stability through security cooperation and maintaining freedom of navigation.

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

Answer. Iran poses a conventional and unconventional threat to the security of U.S. personnel and partners in the region. Conventional threats include ballistic missiles capable of hitting U.S. military facilities in the region and naval forces capable of threatening freedom of navigation in the Gulf and Strait of Hormuz. Iran also employs unconventional activities, including cyber-attacks and intrusions, attacks on civilian shipping and energy infrastructure, and regional weapons proliferation. Iran also directs, trains, supplies, and funds militia groups across the region to advance Iran's interests, threaten United States partners, and undermine regional stability.

Question. Are United States military forces and capabilities currently deployed to the CENTCOM AOR adequate to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats posed by Iran?

Answer. If confirmed, this is an issue that I will assess in more detail with civilian and military leadership. The United States should draw on all tools, not just U.S. military force posture, to secure United States interests in the Middle East. The Department must balance readiness and force modernization requirements against the security situation in the region. If confirmed, I will review our force presence to ensure that it is properly balanced with global requirements and the health of the joint force.

MULTINATIONAL FORCE & OBSERVERS (MFO) IN EGYPT

Question. The United States is a significant contributor to the Multinational Force & Observers (MFO) in Egypt.

In your view, what are the benefits of our participation in the MFO?

Answer. U.S. participation in the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) benefits U.S. security objectives in several ways. First, as a trusted partner of both Israel and Egypt, the United States military presence in the MFO provides ironclad reassurance to both parties. Both Egypt and Israel strongly support United States participation in the MFO; absent a strong and trusted arbiter capable of convening the two sides for dispute resolution, either party could choose to remilitarize along the border, increasing the potential of a miscalculation that could lead to overt conflict. Second, U.S. participation in the MFO demonstrates our leadership in the region as a reliable guarantor of regional stability. Such leadership bolsters U.S. credibility to pursue major diplomatic and security initiatives in the region and around the globe. Should the United States diminish its presence in the MFO, it is likely that other international contributors to the MFO would follow suit, potentially endangering the continuation of the mission. U.S. leadership and presence in the region likewise prevents more opportunistic competitors such as China and Russia from potentially taking advantage of a diminished United States presence.

Question. If confirmed, what criteria would you use to evaluate the advisability of any potential reduction in United States military participation in or support to the MFO?

Answer. As with all decisions regarding force management levels, we must carefully consider how deployments affect the readiness of our military. The MFO relies upon high demand/low density personnel and equipment, including explosive ordnance disposal, aviation, logistics, legal, and medical career fields. The Department of Defense recognizes the need to prioritize investments of personnel and equipment across all of our vital national interests. Any consideration of changes to the level of United States support to the MFO would take into account potential impacts on the MFO, the Egypt-Israel Treaty of Peace, United States obligations under applicable international agreements, and broader regional stability, and involve consultation with the United States Department of State, the governments of Egypt and Israel, and other international partners who contribute to the MFO.

UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND (EUCOM)

Implementation of the 2018 NDS

Question. Do you believe the deterrent posture in Europe is sufficient to support the 2018 NDS and deter further Russian aggression in Europe?

Answer. President-elect Biden pledged a comprehensive review of our global military posture relative to the threats we face and, if confirmed, I look forward to leading that effort and examining how that posture should change over time. While I have not yet fully reviewed our deterrent posture in Europe, I believe it must be a part of this review. If confirmed, I will also want this review to examine the Trump Administration decision to withdraw significant numbers of United States troops from Germany.

Question. In your assessment, which capability and/or capacity shortfalls in current U.S. posture most adversely affect U.S. ability to address the threats in EUCOM?

Answer. The U.S. should have a combat-credible forward presence in EUCOM sufficient to deter and, if necessary, defeat aggression in accordance with U.S. national security interests. If confirmed, I will lead a global military posture review to assess the current U.S. posture, including in EUCOM.

Question. In your assessment, does the United States have sufficient air and missile defense capability and capacity to defend critical infrastructure in EUCOM? What are the areas of highest risk?

Answer. I have not yet reviewed U.S. military posture in EUCOM. I understand that U.S. military and Allied capabilities, including Integrated Air and Missile Defense systems, have improved in recent years, facilitated in part by the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) and other initiatives. If confirmed, I will review the appropriate mix of capabilities necessary to meet U.S. national security objectives, including in EUCOM.

In EUCOM, the highest military risks are Russia's aggressive behavior to undermine European security coupled with its military modernization, including investments in long-range cruise missiles, undersea and cyber capabilities, as well as the development and fielding of its new, so-called "novel" nuclear systems, and the large and varied arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons.

Question. If confirmed, what specific enhancements would you make to other United States capabilities and force posture in Europe to execute the NDS more effectively?

Answer. If confirmed, I would initiate a global force posture review relative to the threats we face and examine how that posture should change over time. That review would, of course, include United States posture in Europe, particularly given Russia's aggressive behavior, and I would closely consult our NATO allies in considering any changes. Finally, I would continue to encourage our allies to increase their investments in modernization and new defense capabilities.

European Deterrence Initiative (EDI)

Question. The Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA authorized \$4.5 billion for the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) to support stability and security, and to deter Russian aggression.

In your view, has EDI improved United States and allied capability and capacity to deter Russian aggression in the European theater?

Answer. EDI funding has enabled DOD to increase our force presence in Europe, improve critical capabilities, establish prepositioned equipment sets, and execute readiness-building exercises, all of which have contributed to USEUCOM's warfighting capabilities and deterrence.

Question. Do you believe continued, dedicated funding for EDI is required to support implementation of the NDS in Europe?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the range of resource requirements to support our defense objectives in Europe. EDI funding has helped the Department maintain a combat-credible force in Europe, which is essential to deterring and, if required, defeating aggression against the United States and our NATO allies.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure DOD compliance with statutory requirements and Senate Armed Services Committee requests for detailed funding information concerning future years' plans for EDI?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue to ensure appropriate DOD compliance with statutory requirements and Senate Armed Services Committee requests for information concerning funding for future years' plans for EDI.

NATO Alliance

Question. In your view, how important to U.S. strategic interests is the U.S. commitment to its obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty, especially Article 5?

Answer. Vitally important. Our shared commitment to the values enshrined in the Washington Treaty has made NATO the most successful alliance in history; helped to keep the United States politically, economically, and militarily strong; and helped to safeguard our way of life. Article 5 is the cornerstone of our collective security within NATO, and I am fully committed to ensuring that the United States fulfills its obligations under Article 5.

Question. What do you view as the essential strategic objectives of the NATO Alliance and what do you perceive to be the greatest challenges in meeting those objectives?

Answer. NATO's top strategic objectives are deterring nuclear and non-nuclear aggression, defending Allied populations and territory if deterrence fails, and projecting stability beyond NATO's borders. U.S. leadership is required to meet these strategic objectives, as is a shared responsibility among Allies for our common defense. Maintaining unity in the face of active and continued attempts to fracture the Alliance and ensuring ready forces and capabilities may be NATO's greatest challenges.

Question. If confirmed, how would you prioritize the development of a plan to train, certify, and maintain the readiness and interoperability of NATO's "Four Thirties" units, and what would be the key element of such a plan?

Answer. If confirmed, maintaining ready and interoperable forces and capabilities will be among my highest priorities. I am aware that Allies have approved a plan to train, certify, and maintain the units associated with the "Four Thirties," which I will review with my counterparts if confirmed. I also understand that the "Four Thirties" was the first step of the NATO Readiness Initiative, and I would consider additional steps to rebuild a culture of readiness at NATO.

Question. In December 2020, NATO reaffirmed the Allies' longstanding position that, "as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance." In your view, do you believe this principle requires the United States to continue to deploy nuclear weapons in NATO countries?

Answer. The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capabilities is to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression. The presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in NATO countries for the last 50 years has successfully deterred aggression against the Alliance, and they continue to provide an essential political and military link between Europe and North America. In my view, they should remain in NATO countries for as long as nuclear weapons remain a threat.

Question. How would you define and measure the success of the new NATO Joint Force Command for the Atlantic in Norfolk, Virginia, and the Enabling Command in Ulm, Germany, in enhancing credible deterrence in Europe?

Answer. As the newest headquarters in the NATO Command Structure, both the Joint Force Command in Norfolk and the Joint Support and Enabling Command in Ulm must first be certified as fully operationally capable. At that point, if confirmed, I will measure the extent to which the headquarters successfully develop and integrate plans to move forces across the Atlantic and through Europe, defend critical infrastructure, and secure the multi-domain lines of communication that will ensure Allied forces in Europe are supported and sustained in peace and crisis. If confirmed, I will ask to be briefed on the NATO certification and exercise programs to ensure these headquarters are appropriately certified, tested, and incorporated into NATO's strategic exercises.

Question. In your view, how important is it to align the defense efforts of the European Union (EU) and NATO, and what effect would an EU decision to exclude the United States from participation in European Defense Fund (EDF) and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects have on that alignment?

Answer. Continued and enhanced cooperation between the EU and NATO is critical, especially in light of the hybrid threats that require whole-of-government responses. The EU's efforts to enhance cyber security and hasten military mobility, for example, are key to strengthening both societal resilience and military deterrence. Excluding U.S. participation in EDF and PESCO projects would be counterproductive to closer EU-NATO cooperation and risks EU capabilities developing in a manner that produces duplication, non-interoperable military systems, diversion of scarce defense resources, and unnecessary competition.

Russia

Question. What are appropriate objectives for United States-Russia security relations, and what security interests common to the United States and Russia would you emphasize, if confirmed?

Answer. Russia has used military force and other acts of coercion and intimidation in pursuit of a geopolitical agenda that is contradictory and inimical to the rule of law and U.S. national interests. The primary objective in United States-Russia security relations must be to deter Russia from acting against vital United States interests, including by defending our allies from military aggression, strengthening our partners' capacity to resist coercion, and imposing appropriate consequences for malign activities. If confirmed, I will look for ways to prevent a dangerous escalation in tensions, stand firm in defense of our interests and values, and will leave the door open to greater cooperation with Russia in areas of mutual interest. Some potential areas of greater security cooperation include: strategic arms control, counterterrorism, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and deconfliction in areas where our military forces are operating in close proximity to each other.

Question. In your view, which EUCOM and NATO activities most deter Russia and mitigate the Russian threat to NATO Allies and partners? How do these activities fit into a whole-of-government approach?

Answer. There is no one activity by itself that can sufficiently deter Russia and mitigate its threat; rather, it is the complex array of deterrence activities the United States and its allies in Europe conduct to deter Russian aggression effectively. In particular, the combination of consistent United States-NATO deterrent presence and training exercises demonstrate resolve and combat-credible capability and capacity to operate throughout Europe.

As Russia increasingly utilizes a whole-of-government approach to achieving its geopolitical objectives, the Department of Defense continues to organize its resources to compete with Russia below the level of armed conflict. DOD currently supports broader United States Government initiatives to counter Russian influence by deterring and defending against all forms of aggression, building partner capacity to resist hybrid threats, and holding Russia accountable for its malign actions. If confirmed, I will review our authorities, resources, and policies to ensure that we are optimally positioned to support U.S. whole-of-government efforts.

Question. What aspects of United States and NATO force posture do you assess as having the most significant deterrent effect on Russia?

Answer. Along with our Allies, it is critical that we maintain combat-credible conventional and nuclear forces to provide the most effective deterrent against Russian aggression. Our posture must be credibly lethal, resilient, agile, and ready. If confirmed, I will undertake a posture review to ensure the right mix of forces and capabilities sufficient to deter Russia.

Question. What should DOD do to counter Russian influence in Europe?

Answer. In my view, maintaining combat-credible conventional and nuclear forces is one of the most effective deterrents against Russian military aggression. However, the Russian threat continues to evolve in a direction that combines both hard and soft power through the use of hybrid tactics. Operations employing such tactics are multilayered and sophisticated and aimed at building Russian influence across the globe. Effectively countering Russian influence in Europe demands a comprehensive approach involving our allies and partners, other United States Government departments and agencies, and the private sector. For many aspects of hybrid warfare, the Department of Defense cannot achieve success without unified and integrated efforts by our interagency partners and allies, particularly in diplomacy, development, law enforcement, information, and intelligence.

Question. As exemplified by the Severodvinsk, Russia possesses advanced submarine capability. What capabilities or capacity should the U.S. Navy provide to ensure NATO advantage in this regard?

Answer. The Navy is committed to maintaining its decisive advantage in the air, surface, and undersea domains, and denying any potential adversaries the same advantage. The commander of our newly established U.S. Second Fleet is dual-hatted

as the commander of NATO's Joint Force Command in Norfolk and is tasked to ensure both headquarters operate seamlessly to increase Allied maritime domain awareness and capability. Both headquarters will also synchronize their exercise programs and operations in the Atlantic to maintain our sea and air lines of communication. If confirmed, I will undertake a review to ensure Naval assets are appropriately resourced and postured to contend with threats posed by Russia.

Question. In your view, what are Russia's strategic goals in the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean? Do you believe that NATO and U.S. force posture need to improve in those areas? If so, what improvements would you direct or support, if confirmed?

Answer. Russia's strategic goals in the Black Sea include maintaining access to the Mediterranean Sea and facilitating the defense of the Russian homeland. In the eastern Mediterranean, Russia seeks to expand power projection capabilities, demonstrate expeditionary reach to potential partners, and influence a variety of ongoing diplomatic and regional issues in its favor. Russia's maritime activities in the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean Sea are also likely intended to maintain pressure as part of its ongoing campaign to undermine and destabilize Ukraine and Georgia, challenge United States and allied operations and freedom of maneuver, and to put in place the necessary pieces to complicate U.S. warfighting operations.

If confirmed, I will make it a high priority to review our force posture in this region to ensure the strength of our deterrence along NATO's Eastern and Southern Flanks and our continued mobility in response to crises.

United States and NATO force posture in the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean regions is key in deterring Russian aggression. Just as Russia's strategic goals in these regions are not static, U.S. and NATO force posture must be regularly reassessed to ensure it is making the intended impacts. If confirmed, I will ensure our force posture is reviewed, updated and improved as needed.

Question. In your view, does DOD currently have a mature joint concept of operations to mitigate the challenge of Russian anti-access, area denial (A2/AD) capabilities? If not, what is needed to ensure U.S. Forces have operational freedom of maneuver at decisive points?

Answer. I understand that the Department is working on development of a Joint Warfighting Concept. If confirmed, I will review the progress to date on this effort, and determine what follow-on concept work is needed to ensure a strategy-driven, joint approach to future warfighting, including to address the challenges uniquely posed by Russian anti-access, area denial capabilities.

If confirmed, I will review the Department's progress to date in developing a Joint Warfighting Concept that ensures United States Forces have freedom of maneuver in the challenging operating environment posed by Russian anti-access, area denial capabilities. My understanding is that the Department's ongoing concept work is focused on ensuring the effectiveness and resilience of key joint warfighting functions such as command and control, fires, logistics, and information advantage; my review will account for these and other areas as relevant to joint operations against the Russia threat. The United States must have operational freedom of maneuver at decisive points.

Question. In September 2019, Secretary Esper noted that "our adversaries will continue to target our democratic processes" and that "influence operations are at a scope and scale never before imagined."

Do you agree with these assessments? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes, I do. Russia has threatened United States democratic processes and exerted its malign influence on the world stage. Operating below the threshold of armed conflict, Russia continues to target the United States through a number of sophisticated cyber and information operations, including infiltration of institutions vital to our democracy. Russia will likely remain a credible threat for years to come, exploiting the United States' openness and driving wedges between the United States and its partners in an effort to weaken U.S. standing and credibility.

Question. In that same speech, Secretary Esper declared "election security an enduring mission for the Department of Defense." How would you envision DOD supporting the mission of defending our democratic processes from interference by foreign adversaries?

Answer. DOD is part of a whole-of-government effort to defend elections. The FBI leads the U.S. Government's efforts to counter foreign influence operations, and DHS leads the U.S. Government's efforts to support state and local governments' election security efforts. DOD provides DHS and the FBI with insights into adversary activities. DOD may also provide defense support of civil authorities, upon request, should a cyber-incident exceed the capacity of another department or agency.

Question. Do you assess that our actions to date are currently deterring Russia and other foreign adversaries who wish to interfere in our elections?

Answer. I have no reason to doubt the assessment of our Intelligence Community that our foreign adversaries continue to attempt interference in our election process. If confirmed, I will work with my interagency counterparts to review ways to improve our deterrence when it comes to Russia and other adversarial influence operations. This is a key challenge and one we must do better in addressing.

Ukraine

Question. The Russian attack on Ukrainian ships in the Black Sea in November 2018 represented a major escalation in Russia's war on Ukraine. In fiscal year 2019, for the first time, DOD's Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) was used to provide lethal assistance to Ukraine.

What do you see as the role of United States security assistance in building the capabilities and capacity of Ukraine to meet its military requirements to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity?

Answer. United States security assistance efforts to build the capacity of Ukraine's forces should remain a priority. If confirmed, and assuming continued progress on governance and anti-corruption reforms, I will strongly support efforts to provide training, equipment, and advisory support to help Ukraine's forces preserve the country's territorial integrity in the face of Russia's continued aggression.

Question. In your assessment, should a greater proportion of USAI be dedicated to lethal assistance? What are the obstacles, if any, to increasing lethal assistance?

Answer. I support the provision of lethal assistance to ensure Ukraine has the equipment it needs to defend itself. Ukraine also has critical non-lethal requirements, such as secure communications equipment, that is funded through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI). There is currently a good balance of lethal and non-lethal assistance to meet Ukraine's capability needs. If confirmed, I will continue to actively assess Ukraine's security assistance needs and make adjustments, as necessary.

Question. Do you believe corruption, including but not limited to the defense sector, is a national security threat to Ukraine?

Answer. Although the United States is currently able to address Ukraine's most pressing operational needs, lengthy technology release processes, contracting, and procurement timelines could limit DOD's ability to provide a greater proportion of more advanced defensive lethal capabilities through USAI. This is primarily due to the statutory requirement to obligate half of the USAI funds before the end of the fiscal year in which they are appropriated.

NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR)

Question. KFOR includes approximately 650 U.S. servicemembers. In your view, what is KFOR's continuing role in maintaining security and stability in the Western Balkans?

Answer. The Kosovo Force (KFOR) has helped maintain a safe and secure environment in Kosovo and has bolstered stability more broadly across the Western Balkans. If confirmed, I will assess our KFOR contributions—in coordination with NATO and the EU—as part of a broader posture review aimed at ensuring the most effective distribution of United States Forces and capabilities globally. Our goal remains a Europe that is secure, democratic, and undivided, including in the Western Balkans.

Question. Do you believe the United States should maintain its commitment to KFOR?

Answer. I recognize the important role that KFOR continues to play in bringing stability to the Western Balkans. U.S. contributions to KFOR are small relative to their impact. If confirmed, I will assess our KFOR contributions—in coordination with NATO and the EU—as part of a broader posture review aimed at ensuring the most effective distribution of U.S. forces and capabilities globally.

Question. Is Russian and Chinese influence increasing or decreasing in the Western Balkans? What do you believe DOD's role should be, if any, in countering such influence?

Answer. Malign actors such as Russia and China increasingly attempt to exploit ethnic tensions, corruption, and weak rule of law in the Western Balkans through disinformation, cyberattacks, and economic manipulation. These tactics represent a strategy designed to undermine regional stability, hinder Euro-Atlantic integration, and secure critical infrastructure.

Chinese Influence Activities in Europe

Question. The London Declaration issued by NATO Heads of State in December 2019 recognized that "China's growing influence and international policies present both opportunities and challenges that we need to address together as an Alliance."

Do you share security concerns about China's growing influence in the European area, and if so, what role do you see for NATO in addressing these concerns?

Answer. Yes, China's growing influence and international policies present challenges in the European area that NATO needs to address. The Alliance acknowledged China's growing influence in 2019 and finalized a comprehensive report on China in December 2020, which are important steps in understanding and addressing the implications of China's rise. The next step will be the inclusion of China in the Alliance's forthcoming strategic concept. Among other things, NATO's role should include intelligence sharing on the risks posed by China, political and economic coordination (including with the EU), and continuing to help increase the resilience of Member States, including their critical infrastructure and secure communications.

UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND (INDO-PACOM) AND CHINA

China

Question. The Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA authorized \$2.2 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) to support the stability and security of the region and deter further Chinese aggression.

Is the current United States Force posture in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support the NDS? How would you propose to restructure United States security posture in the Indo-Pacific to counter Chinese aggression, if confirmed? Please explain your answer.

Answer. There's no question that we need a more resilient and distributed force posture in the Indo-Pacific in response to China's counter-intervention capabilities and approaches, supported by new operational concepts. If confirmed, I'll review our posture in the Indo-Pacific including our presence, capabilities, logistics, exercises, infrastructure, and capacity building and cooperation with allies and partners.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work across the Department to identify those programs most critical to increasing our military effectiveness in the Indo-Pacific region and ensure that those programs are prioritized appropriately.

Question. In your view, will PDI be a useful tool to improve United States posture in the Indo-Pacific? In your opinion, how could PDI help gauge progress in improving the adequacy of the United States posture as it relates to deterring Chinese aggression?

Answer. Yes, I believe PDI will be a useful tool. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to ensure its effective implementation.

I believe PDI will help to focus attention on the progress the United States is making to establish a more distributed and resilient posture that deters China's aggression and reassures our allies and partners.

Question. Do you believe that continued, dedicated funding for PDI is required to support implementation of the NDS in the Indo-Pacific? Please explain your answer.

Answer. I believe that PDI is an important step as DOD invests in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with Congress to examine how best to ensure sufficient funding for our shared priority of a distributed and resilient United States Force posture in the Indo-Pacific region.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure compliance with statutory requirements and Senate Armed Services Committee requests for detailed funding information concerning future years' plans for PDI?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure that the Department provides detailed funding information for annual PDI investments and complies with all other statutory requirements.

Question. The size, diversity, and capabilities of China's cruise, ballistic, and hypervelocity missile forces create significant asymmetry in the current balance of forces in the Indo-Pacific theater.

How would you assess the threat to United States Forces, bases, and mission success from Chinese missile forces? How would you evaluate our ability to address such threats? In your assessment, what U.S. investments, concepts of operations, and posture shifts are required to address this threat?

Answer. China's military modernization—including in cruise, ballistic, and hypersonic missiles—coupled with its aggressive and coercive actions, presents an increasingly urgent challenge to our vital interests in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world. We will need to continue to strengthen our force posture in the region, making it more resilient, including through investments in capabilities and new operational concepts. The Biden administration will view China as our most se-

rious global competitor and, from a defense perspective, the pacing threat in most areas.

If confirmed, I will further focus the Department on China, including the growing missile threat. I will begin by taking stock of the broad range of activities and investments the Department has made in recent years, include investments to maintain our technological advantage and the development of new concepts and capabilities to counter China across the spectrum of conflict; updates to United States Force posture in the region, including through the Pacific Deterrence Initiative; and efforts to strengthen our alliances and partnerships. I'll seek to understand how my predecessors have risen to the China challenge and then chart a course for the Department's next steps.

If confirmed, I will carefully review the Department's investments, concept and capability development, force posture, and alliances to address the threat from China before determining the next phases of the Department's work in this vital area.

Question. In developing the Joint Multi-Domain Operational Concept for the Indo-Pacific theater, the INDO-PACOM Commander, the Joint Chiefs, and Secretary of Defense Esper endorsed a major role for Army and Marine Corps ground forces operating within the first island chain as part of the contact and blunt layers.

What are your views at this time on these plans?

Answer. Army and Marine Corps forces are an important component of United States Force posture in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Joint Staff, Army, and Marine Corps to continue development of their operating concepts as part of the Department's overall strategy in the Indo-Pacific region.

Question. In your assessment, does DOD need to invest in a wider range of primary bases as well as alternate operating locations throughout the Indo-Pacific? Do we need a more forward-deployed military posture in the Indo-Pacific theater?

Answer. There's no question that we need a more resilient and distributed force posture in the Indo-Pacific in response to China's counter-intervention capabilities, supported by new operational concepts. If confirmed, I'll review our posture in the Indo-Pacific from all aspects including presence, capabilities, logistics, exercises, infrastructure, and capacity building and cooperation with allies and partners.

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Question. What is your assessment of the current military balance across the Taiwan Strait? If confirmed, what would you do to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability?

Answer. If confirmed, I will carefully review the current military balance across the Taiwan Strait. President-elect Biden has said many times that United States support for Taiwan must remain strong, principled, and bipartisan, in line with longstanding American commitments to the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances. We will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan. If confirmed, I will also ensure the United States meets our commitment to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability. Doing so increases stability both across the Taiwan Strait and within the region. At the same time, we will further buttress peace and stability by developing new concepts and capabilities to strengthen our own deterrent in the region. Bipartisan support for Taiwan in Congress is critical, and I look forward to working with Members on this crucial issue.

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Question. Should the United States revisit or change its "one China" policy, in your view?

Answer. President-elect Biden has said many times that United States support for Taiwan must remain strong, principled, and bipartisan, in line with longstanding

American commitments to the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances.

Question. In furtherance of its stated intent to possess almost 100 more ships than the United States Navy by 2030, China has launched a massive shipbuilding program. Although all of China's Navy will be focused on the Indo-Pacific, the United States maintains only about 60 percent of its fleet in the Pacific.

In your assessment, how should the United States adapt to this shifting maritime balance in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. China's military modernization, coupled with its aggressive and coercive actions, presents an increasingly urgent challenge to our vital interests in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world. The Biden administration will view China as our most serious global competitor and, from a defense perspective, the pacing threat in most areas. If confirmed, I will further focus the Department on China and work to identify and prioritize those programs most critical to maintaining a favorable maritime balance in the Indo-Pacific. That will include investing to maintain our technological advantage and developing new concepts and capabilities to counter China across the spectrum of conflict; updating United States Force posture in the region, including through the Pacific Deterrence Initiative; and strengthening our alliances and partnerships.

The Korean Peninsula

Question. How would you describe the value to U.S. national security interests of the United States-South Korea alliance and what is the significance of resolving the Special Measures Agreement between the United States and the Republic of Korea?

Answer. The United States-Republic of Korea (ROK) Alliance is the linchpin of peace and security in the region. It is among the most combined, interoperable, capable, and dynamic bilateral alliances in the world, and is a robust deterrent to aggression on the Korean Peninsula. Strengthening America's alliances will be at the center of President-elect Biden's foreign policy and national security strategy. Having built coalitions and fought alongside our allies for decades, I consider our unparalleled network of allies and partners one of our greatest strategic advantages—and the foundation of our position as a Pacific power. If confirmed, I will focus on modernizing our alliances throughout the Indo-Pacific and will seek the early conclusion of cost sharing negotiations with South Korea as part of those efforts.

Question. Do you believe the transfer of wartime operational control from the United States to the Republic of Korea should be conditions-based? If confirmed, what threshold requirements for transfer of control would you establish?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the status of Operational Control (OPCON) transfer from the United States to the Republic of Korea (ROK), including the bilaterally approved "Conditions-based OPCON Transition Plan" (COT-P) signed in 2015.

Question. In your view, are there additional steps that DOD should take to improve United States and allied defenses against North Korea's missile capabilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the full range of current and proposed activities to enhance United States and allied defenses against North Korea's missile capabilities.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that United States Forces Korea has the capability to defeat weapons of mass destruction sites in North Korea and how would you involve the United States interagency in such actions?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the necessary military requirements for our major operational plans, including on the Korean peninsula. I will also work with partners across the interagency—to include the State Department, Treasury Department, the Department of Energy and the Intelligence Community—as well as regional partners and allies—including Japan and the Republic of Korea—to forge a comprehensive approach to addressing the North Korea nuclear, weapons of mass destruction, missile, and cyber threats.

Question. DOD policy constraining the use of certain cluster munitions went into effect on December 31, 2018. How will these constraints affect the ability of the United States military to meet requirements on the Korean peninsula?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the necessary military requirements for our major operational plans, including on the Korean peninsula.

India

Question. If confirmed, how would you enhance the overall defense relationship between the United States and India? What priorities would you establish?

Answer. If confirmed, my overarching objective for our defense relationship with India would be to continue elevating the partnership. I would further operationalize India's "Major Defense Partner" status and continue to build upon existing strong

defense cooperation to ensure the United States and Indian militaries can collaborate to address shared interests. I would also seek to deepen and broaden our defense cooperation through the Quad security dialogue and other regional multilateral engagements.

UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND (NORTHCOM)

Defense Support to Civil Authorities

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

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

Answer. Yes, I understand these procedures are well-documented and field-tested. Federal, State, and local agencies plan together to prepare for and respond to major disasters, emergencies, and security events and then put these plans and procedures to the test in exercises. If confirmed, I will have the opportunity to review these plans and procedures and evaluate how well the Department of Defense has incorporated lessons learned regarding Federal, State, and local requests for assistance.

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

Answer. Consistent with the law and DOD policy, DOD considers six factors: (1) legality (would providing the requested support comply with law?); (2) lethality (does the requested support involve the potential use of lethal force by or against DOD forces?); (3) risk (would providing the requested support pose an unacceptable risk to the safety of DOD forces?); (4) cost (will DOD be reimbursed for the support and what effect will providing the support have on the DOD budget?); (5) appropriateness (would providing the requested support be appropriate and in DOD's interest?); and (6) readiness (how will providing the requested support impact DOD's ability to perform its other primary missions?).

Question. In your view, what missions and tasks are appropriate for execution by members of the Armed Forces charged to provide support to civil authorities in countering a civil disturbance or, when directed, to provide support under sections 251, 252, or 253 of title 10, U.S. Code?

Answer. I would not want to prejudge potential actions necessary to support civil authorities. In accordance with sections 251, 252, or 253 of Title 10, U.S. Code, National Guard members called into Federal service and members of the Armed Forces may be used as the President considers necessary to: (a) suppress an insurrection (Section 251), (b) enforce the laws of the United States or to suppress a rebellion (Section 252); or (c) suppress, in a State, any insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful combination, or conspiracy. The missions and tasks assigned must be appropriate to the specific circumstances and risks involved and consistent with the law. If confirmed, I will ensure that the President receives my best advice and that National Guard members called into Federal service and members of the Armed Forces carry out missions and tasks that are appropriate, compliant with the law, and appropriately respectful of rights and civil liberties.

Question. In your view, what is the efficacy of DOD's response to the COVID-19 pandemic? How could DOD's response be improved, in your view, and what role would you envision as appropriate for DOD in response to future pandemics?

Answer. DOD has an important supporting role in our nation's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Health and Human Services is the lead Federal agency, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency is the lead Federal coordinating agency. DOD has contributed thousands of military and civilian personnel, equipment, and supplies to our nation's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. I consider this mission my most immediate priority. If confirmed, I will actively review the status of DOD's support and DOD's protection of its personnel and look for opportunities to make improvements.

Question. What is your assessment of DOD's role in producing and distributing COVID-19 vaccines? Are there particular functions or types of support that you believe DOD to be uniquely capable of executing?

Answer. It is my understanding that DOD has been a major contributor to Operation Warp Speed's efforts to produce and distribute COVID-19 vaccines. If confirmed, I will review DOD's support to identify opportunities to continue or enhance this support.

DOD's major contribution is capacity. For example, medical personnel are not unique to DOD, but DOD medical capacity filled the gaps when hospitals were overwhelmed. Additionally, while DOD is not the only agency that can procure critical equipment and supplies, DOD logistical capability helped deliver critical equipment

and supplies where they were most needed, including: personal protective equipment (PPE); medical equipment; ventilators; masks; N95 respirators; medical gowns; gloves; test kits; test components; hand sanitizer; food; and fuel

The Arctic

Question. What threat do Russian and Chinese activities in the Arctic pose to United States interests?

Answer. Climate change is drastically altering the natural environment of the Arctic—and the strategic balance. This is fast becoming a region of geopolitical competition, and I have serious concerns about the Russian military buildup and aggressive behavior in the Arctic—and around the world. Likewise, I am deeply concerned about Chinese intentions in the region. If confirmed, I will assess the situation and consult allies and partners on the strategy, posture, and equipment required to ensure a stable and open Arctic, as well as to protect the Homeland, our economic interests, and deter aggression.

Question. In your view, what are the implications of Russian infrastructure investments in the Arctic for U.S. and allied security interests?

Answer. The United States has a long history of cooperation with Russia in the Arctic region, and it is my hope that can continue. I have serious concerns, however, about the Russian military buildup in the region and Russia's aggressive conduct in the Arctic and around the world, as well as the importance of protecting the global commons and international law in the region. If confirmed, I pledge to review United States posture, strategy, and equipment for the full range of Arctic defense missions, and to ensure that our strategy toward Russia is coherent and effective.

Question. In your view, are current U.S. and allied ports in the region sufficient to achieve U.S. defense interests in the Arctic?

Answer. I have not yet reviewed the full U.S. posture in the Arctic, or that of our allies and partners. If confirmed, I will assess the situation and consult allies and partners on the strategy and posture required to ensure a stable and open Arctic, as well as to protect the Homeland, our economic interests, and deter aggression.

UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND (SOUTHCOM)

Question. If confirmed, what recommendations would you make to the President to deter Russian, Cuban, and Chinese influence in the SOUTHCOM AOR?

Answer. The United States must leverage all instruments of national power to counter Russian, Cuban, and Chinese influence in SOUTHCOM. DOD has an important role in demonstrating American values and military culture in the region. Strong bilateral and multilateral defense partnerships, enabled by engagements and presence, intelligence and information exchanges, and educational programs and exercises, are necessary tools to minimize the influence of malign actors in the hemisphere.

Question. Do you believe these influences threaten hemispheric security and prosperity?

Answer. Russia, Cuba, and China are actively seeking opportunities to deepen their political, economic, and security influence in the hemisphere. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Under Secretary for Policy, the SOUTHCOM Commander, and other U.S. Government agencies to ensure we are able to check and counter the negative influence of these countries.

Detainee Treatment and Guantanamo Bay Naval Station

Question. Do you support the standards for detainee treatment specified in Army Field Manual 2-22.3, Human Intelligence Collector Operations, issued in September 2006 and DOD Directive 2310.01E, Department of Defense Detainee Program, dated August 19, 2014, and required by Section 1045 of the NDAA for fiscal year 2016?

Answer. Yes, I support the standards for detainee treatment in the Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued in September 2006, and in DOD Directive 2310.01E, DOD Detainee Program, dated August 19, 2014 (Incorporating Change 2, Effective September 18, 2020), and required by Section 1045 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 (Public Law 114-92). Individuals in the custody or control of the U.S. Government may not be subjected to any interrogation technique or approach, or any treatment related to interrogation, that is not authorized by and listed in the Army Field Manual.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that DOD detainee operations and interrogations comply strictly with these standards?

Answer. If confirmed, I would exercise leadership to ensure that DOD detainee operations and interrogations comply strictly with these standards and are in keeping with our values. I would emphasize the need for the continued safe, humane, and legal care and treatment of detainees. I would also work through the Combat-

ant Commanders to ensure that DOD policies on the humane treatment of detainees continue to be effectively implemented in military operations, including the requirements to report, investigate, and, where appropriate, take corrective action with respect to any suspected or alleged incidents of detainee maltreatment.

Question. What are your views on the continued use of the detention facility at Guantanamo?

Answer. I believe it is time for the detention facility at Guantanamo to close its doors. If confirmed, I would direct my staff to work with other Administration officials to develop a path forward for the remaining 40 detainees at the facility. Until that time, however, the Department must ensure the continued safe, humane, and legal care and treatment of detainees through Joint Task Force-Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO).

Question. Do you believe the U.S. Government should be keeping detainees in long term detention, without charges or prosecution? In your view, under what circumstances would such long-term detention be appropriate?

Answer. Guantanamo has provided us the capability to conduct law of war detention in order to keep our enemies off the battlefield, but I believe it is time for the detention facility at Guantanamo to close. My understanding is that the Biden-Harris administration does not intend to bring new detainees to the facility and will seek to close it.

Question. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to reinvigorate the Periodic Review Board (PRB) process established by Executive Order 13567, Periodic Review of Individuals Detained at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station Pursuant to the Authorization for Use of Military Force?

Answer. If confirmed, I would reinvigorate the review process using available information to determine whether a detainee no longer poses a continuing significant threat to the security of the United States and whether there is a suitable country to which to transfer such a detainee. The Periodic Review Board Process is currently the best means available for making such determinations in a systematic manner. If the PRB process concludes that the threat from individual detainees may be sufficiently mitigated, then the U.S. Government should identify options for the transfer of such detainees to other countries that have provided credible security assurances in accordance with applicable legal and policy requirements.

Question. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to address the cases of detainees already recommended by a PRB for transfer from Guantanamo to another nation?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support the PRB process. If the PRB process concludes that the threat from individual detainees may be sufficiently mitigated with appropriate security assurances, then the U.S. Government should consider the transfer of such detainees to other countries that have provided credible security assurances in accordance with applicable legal and policy requirements.

Question. Will you commit to notifying Congress if a decision is made to transfer a detainee to Guantanamo before any such transfer occurs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department continues to notify Congress as required by law.

Question. In your view, what standard of care should govern the physical and mental health services provided to detainees at Guantanamo, particularly as the detainee population ages?

Answer. The health and well-being of the detainees at Guantanamo are an important part of the mission of JTF-GTMO. Accordingly, U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), through JTF-GTMO, provides adequate and humane care for the detainees at Guantanamo that complies with the standards of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. As the detainee population ages and detainees experience chronic medical conditions, it will remain Department policy to protect the life and health of detainees by humane and appropriate clinical means, and in accordance with all applicable law and DOD policy.

Cuba

Question. Under what conditions would you recommend the establishment of military-to-military engagement between the United States and Cuba?

Answer. The United States military maintains only limited contacts through longstanding, practical meetings regarding routine issues at the Guantanamo Naval Station and between the United States Coast Guard and its Cuban counterparts. The limited nature of this engagement is due in large part to the Cuban regime's continued suppression of the rights and freedoms of the Cuban people and ongoing efforts in support of the Venezuelan dictatorship.

Venezuela

Question. What is your assessment of the current situation in Venezuela and to what degree is the illegitimate Maduro regime dependent on support from external actors like Russia, Cuba, and China?

Answer. President-elect Biden has repeatedly condemned Maduro, who he described as a “dictator, pure and simple.” The dictatorship is the principal reason for the deep humanitarian crisis facing the country. External actors have indeed helped prop the regime against the wishes of the Venezuelan people.

Question. What would be the threshold condition at which you would recommend United States military action in Venezuela, if confirmed?

Answer. I believe DOD should play a supporting role in a whole-of-government and multilateral effort to encourage a peaceful transition of power in Venezuela

Counternarcotics Activities

Question. DOD serves as lead agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime foreign shipments of drugs flowing toward the United States. On an annual basis, DOD expends nearly \$1 billion to build the counternarcotics capacity of U.S. Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies and certain foreign governments.

Do you believe that the U.S. broadly, and the U.S. military more narrowly, have been effective in achieving their counternarcotics objectives?

Answer. I understand that DOD’s main role is supporting interagency and international partners, and that DOD support has helped in the interdiction of drugs headed toward the United States, as well as denied revenue to criminal organizations and others who profit from drug trafficking. If confirmed, I will review these efforts and recommend adjustments as appropriate

Question. What changes, if any, should be made to DOD’s counternarcotics strategy and supporting activities?

Answer. It would be premature for me to recommend changes at this time. If confirmed, I will assess our goals and activities and recommend adjustments as appropriate.

Question. Corruption and the absence of the rule of law enable the Northern Triangle narcotics trade that contributes to the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.

In your view, what should be DOD’s role in countering the flow of narcotics to nations other than the United States?

Answer. Our primary focus should be on the flow of drugs headed to the United States, including the flow that passes through the Northern Triangle countries, bringing criminal activity and instability in its wake. DOD should leverage its military capabilities and expertise as appropriate to help our partners in the region disrupt drug-trafficking networks operating in and around their territory.

Question. How, if at all, should U.S. security assistance be scoped to address factors at the root of counternarcotics trafficking, in your opinion?

Answer. In coordination with other U.S. Government departments and agencies, the Department should assist partner nations in developing capabilities and strengthening defense institutions that respond to their specific security challenges. Focusing our limited resources on those countries that are major drug-producing or transit countries while empowering them to create stable conditions at home and improve security within their region makes it less likely that drug-trafficking networks can thrive.

U.S. SPACE FORCE AND U.S. SPACE COMMAND (SPACECOM)

Question. The United States is increasingly dependent on space, both economically and militarily—from the Global Positioning System on which many industrial and military capabilities rely, to the missile warning systems that underpin U.S. nuclear deterrence. Our great power competitors are making concerted efforts to leap ahead of U.S. technology and impact U.S. freedom of action in the space warfighting domain. Congress created a new Military Service, the Space Force, within the Department of the Air Force, and a unified Space Command, to deal with the challenges stemming from the fact that space is now a contested domain upon which the terrestrial forces of the United States and peer competitors are highly reliant for support.

Do you believe that the creation of the Space Force and SPACECOM was warranted? If so, do you recommend changes in the structure, authorities, and missions of these organizations?

Answer. The decisions to create the U.S. Space Force and the U.S. Space Command reflect recommendations and advice of multiple independent commissions and studies regarding how to adapt our defense space enterprise to the growing security

challenges in space. The House, the Senate, and multiple Administrations have examined these questions over several years, leading to support for creating the U.S. Space Force and the U.S. Space Command.

Congress provided in statute that there should be a civilian Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy, an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration, and the Space Force Acquisition Council, among other changes. These officials and organizations will have an important role in ensuring that we maintain appropriate civilian oversight with respect to our military activities in space, and make decisions that enhance innovation and allocate resources effectively and in a timely manner. If confirmed, I will assess the current structure to ensure the defense space enterprise is postured to advance our national security objectives most effectively.

Establishing the U.S. Space Force as the sixth branch of the Armed Forces and the U.S. Space Command as the eleventh unified combatant command are significant organizational changes within the Department of Defense. Looking ahead, the DOD space enterprise is still not well-integrated with other Services and terrestrial commands, and there are several other challenges that will need to be addressed, as would be expected when establishing a brand new military service and new unified combatant command. If confirmed, I will assess the structure, authorities, and missions of these organizations, as well as their relationship with other stakeholders within the Department of Defense.

Question. In your view, does the current NDS accurately assess the strategic environment as it pertains to the domain of space? If confirmed, what changes would you make to the NDS regarding the space domain?

Answer. The 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) assesses the strategic environment accurately by highlighting great power competition with China and Russia and the importance of working with our allies and partners. The 2020 Defense Space Strategy provides additional detail on the growing space and counterspace threats posed by China and Russia and the extent to which our national security and prosperity require unfettered access to and freedom to operate in the space domain. Since the NDS was developed, the recognition of the central role space plays in supporting other services in their warfighting role continues to grow. If confirmed, I will ensure the space domain is carefully considered across the range of upcoming strategic reviews.

The strategic environment continues to evolve rapidly, especially as it applies to space. If confirmed, I would review changes to the strategic environment since 2018, and address significant shifts in the development of the next National Defense Strategy. For space in particular, I would account for the continued growth of adversary space and counterspace capabilities, as well as the adequacy of the steps the United States has taken to improve the DOD space enterprise to address growing threats and challenges in the domain. I would also emphasize the role of resilience in improving our warfighting capability, the role of allies and partners, and space-related information sharing. Lastly, I would highlight growing commercial activities in space which can both be threats to and opportunities for the United States.

Question. In your view, what will “great power competition” look like in space and to what extent do you view China’s and Russia’s activities related to the space domain as a threat or challenge to United States national security interests?

Answer. Space is already an arena of great power competition. Chinese and Russian space activities present serious and growing threats to United States national security interests. Chinese and Russian military doctrines also indicate that they view space as critical to modern warfare and consider the use of counterspace capabilities as both a means of reducing United States military effectiveness and for winning future wars. Addressing these challenges in the space domain is central to “great power competition” more generally. While Russia is a key adversary, China is the pacing threat. Given the importance of space in affecting our economic competitiveness, it is essential to continue developing best practices, standards, and international norms of behavior in space. Development of global norms of behavior in space will also deter threatening behavior, and uphold the rights of all nations to use space responsibly and peacefully.

Question. Are other nation-states or actors operating in space that you perceive as a risk to the United States, or as cause for concern? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Although not on the same order of magnitude of threat as Chinese and Russian capabilities, space-related threats from Iran and North Korea, such as jamming of satellite communications and GPS signals, are also growing, and hold United States space capabilities at risk. Both countries also maintain independent space launch capabilities, which can serve as avenues for testing ballistic missile technologies. Other countries not considered adversaries or hostile to United States interests are conducting space activities of concern, and there are few norms or

guidelines to dictate how it should be done. This lack of transparency in the space domain is a risk to U.S. assets and cause for concern. Last but not least, growing private activities in space (according to some projections, there will be as many as 54,000 new satellites in orbit in the next decade, mostly privately-owned and operated) are a risk to the United States in the sense that the government needs to ensure that they do not collide with expensive and exquisitely capable government assets.

Question. How would you assess current DOD readiness to implement the 2018 NDS and U.S. strategic objectives as they relate to the domain of space?

Answer. If confirmed, I would want to understand, as a first priority, the state of our military readiness, including space readiness, in particular resilience, vis-à-vis priority threats, in light of U.S. strategic objectives. If confirmed, I would seek to assess whether major DOD space-related investments and ongoing organizational changes, including the creation of the U.S. Space Force and the U.S. Space Command, are improving the readiness of forces across all domains to protect and secure our Homeland and U.S. interests abroad and are advancing the development and employment of spacepower for the Nation.

Question. What do you perceive as the most significant threats to our national security space satellites and commercial space systems owned by U.S. companies?

Answer. The growth of Chinese and Russian counterspace arsenals presents the most immediate and serious threats to United States, allied, and partner space activities. Iran and North Korea have also demonstrated some counterspace capabilities that could pose a threat to militaries using space-based services. As with commercial services in other domains, like airlift, sealift, and cloud computing, we should not expect adversaries to discriminate between military and commercial satellites that support the military, whether in peacetime competition or in the event of a conflict.

Question. Do you support the development of offensive and defensive space systems to counter threats in the space warfighting domain?

Answer. Other nations are contesting the ability of the United States and its allies to operate in space. A balance of offensive and defensive capabilities, as well as resilient architectures, are essential to any credible strategy to deter hostile action and protect vital U.S. interests should conflict extend to space.

Question. If confirmed, what guidance would you give the Commander, SPACECOM to lead Joint Force operations and activities in the space warfighting domain?

Answer. If confirmed, I would see that the Commander, U.S. Space Command, is prepared to protect and defend U.S. interests in space as the President may direct and in a manner consistent with law, including our obligations under relevant international law. SPACECOM must have a deep understanding of Russian and Chinese doctrine, strategy and tactics. The command must be able to protect and defend U.S. interests, and in particular be able to manage escalation and crises in space. I would also direct that DOD space activities contribute actively to shaping a space domain that is secure, stable, and accessible and to deterring threatening or irresponsible behavior in space. This would require that in addition to nurturing technology innovation in-house for resilience, SPACECOM work within the Department and across the government to build strong alliances in space, develop norms and standards of behavior, and increase partnerships with commercial space entities. Lastly, the commander should emphasize not just wartime roles of space warfighting, but also peacetime roles of ensuring access to space for the U.S. and our allies.

Question. What is your vision for including the Reserve Components as a part of the U.S. Space Force and as contributors to Joint Force space operations?

Answer. Reserve and National Guard units and personnel provide strategic and technical depth for U.S. space operations today. If confirmed, I will review the appropriate organizational structure for the U.S. Space Force Reserve Component in order to design a flexible and forward-looking organization able to compete for the best talent and meet the needs of a twenty-first century military service.

Question. Does the national security space enterprise need a revised approach to space-related acquisition, in your assessment? How would you propose to improve and streamline space acquisition, if confirmed?

Answer. In recent months, there has been guidance on improving the national security space enterprise. Congress has given DOD authority to create a single space acquisition executive. New acquisitions organizations such as the Space Development Agency and the Space Rapid Capabilities Office, among others, have been established. I believe the Department's processes, including its acquisition system, must continue to evolve regardless of domain or mission to become more agile so that we can strengthen warfighting effectiveness and resilience of current systems, better leverage technology, innovation, and partnership opportunities, rapidly deploy

future capabilities, and dynamically adapt to changes in the threat and strategic environment. Together with civil space agencies with whom the Department shares a common industrial base, it needs to leverage innovation and cost-effective investments driven by the private sector, presenting opportunities for collaboration to develop innovative capabilities with a more streamlined and responsive acquisition process.

If confirmed, I would continue to work with Congress to refine the Department's acquisition innovation initiatives, including the Adaptive Acquisition Framework, to accelerate delivery of operational capability, effectively reduce program risk, and enhance the nation's ability to respond to an evolving and ever more capable threat. The Department needs to give new space acquisition organizations (such as the Space Development Agency and the Space Rapid Capabilities Office among others) the opportunity to succeed, and at the same time, review the performance of and reorganize and improve legacy organization for management of space acquisitions (such as the Space and Missile Systems Center). I will also look to models of and best practices for efficient acquisition outside the Department.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that commercial technology is appropriately incorporated into Space Development Agency products and SPACECOM mission execution at acceptable risk levels?

Answer. The Department bears an important responsibility to balance the unique latency, accuracy and reliability needs of the warfighter with the affordability and flexibility offered by commercial space technology to efficiently guarantee mission accomplishment on a global scale. The Space Development Agency is actively pursuing solutions based on commercially available technology. USSPACECOM incorporates commercial technology across nearly all elements of its mission set. If confirmed, I intend to support this and will encourage SDA and SPACECOM to pursue leveraging commercial technology via commercial services and by capitalizing on commercial investments and technology advancements and integrating them into Government-owned and operated systems.

CYBERSECURITY AND U.S. CYBER COMMAND (CYBERCOM)

Question. In May 2018, the Cyber Mission Force achieved full operational capability. In September 2018, DOD released its 2018 Cyber Strategy. The strategy charges DOD to "defend forward, shape the day-to-day competition, and prepare for war".

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?

Answer. In order to defend the nation from an attack in cyberspace, the Cyber Mission Force (CMF) conducts "defend forward" operations against attacks in cyberspace to disrupt or halt malicious cyber activity at its source, including activity that falls below the level of armed conflict. I believe the Department can effectively defend forward in three ways: generating insights about the threat based on our activity outside U.S. networks; enabling better defenses by leveraging those insights to help its interagency, industry, and international partners; and, acting when necessary to disrupt adversary cyber actors. DOD may also provide defense support of civil authorities, upon request, should a cyber-incident exceed the capacity of another department or agency.

The Homeland security and law enforcement communities operate under authorities that are domestically aligned, whereas DOD focuses on foreign State and non-state actors that threaten the interests of the United States. DOD is in constant collaboration with the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation sharing information and threat intelligence that are critical in this whole-of-government approach to defending the Nation from an attack in cyberspace.

Question. How will the "defend forward, shape the day-to-day competition, and prepare for war" concepts deter and disrupt Russia and China in cyberspace?

Answer. China and Russia are conducting persistent malicious cyber campaigns to erode United States military advantages, threaten our infrastructure, and reduce our economic prosperity. I believe the Department must effectively counter these campaigns by taking proactive action to: generate insights about the adversary's cyber operations and capabilities; enable its interagency, industry, and international partners to create better defenses, and; acting, when necessary, to disrupt adversary cyber actors and halt malicious activities.

Question. Congress passed legislation recognizing that clandestine military operations in cyberspace below the threshold of armed conflict may be conducted as traditional military activities under title 10, U.S. Code. In addition, the Trump Admin-

istration promulgated National Security Presidential Memorandum-13, which streamlined the process for proposing, evaluating, and approving cyber operations below the threshold of armed conflict. These reforms have enabled CYBERCOM to implement its strategy of persistent engagement and defending forward in cyberspace.

What are your views on these reforms and their impact?

Answer. These reforms were adopted in response to our adversaries' rapidly evolving and growing malicious cyber activity. I understand these reforms have enabled DOD to develop and employ timely, well-coordinated, and risk-managed cyber-effects operations and have made positive contributions to our ability to perform our missions in and through cyberspace effectively. If confirmed I will review these changes and adjust accordingly if need be.

Question. If confirmed, what role should DOD and the Cyber Mission Force have in combating foreign influence operations, especially those conducted via social media?

Answer. The DOD and the Cyber Mission Force play a supporting role in greater whole-of-government efforts to combat foreign influence operations. In cooperation and coordination with interagency partners, the DOD may bring a number of capabilities and authorities to bear—relative to the circumstances of a particular foreign effort. DOD tools can include cyber effects operations, military information support operations, public outreach, and others. Using combinations of these capabilities in concert with the interagency, I understand the DOD can combat both foreign technical means and also the foreign narrative carried over those technical means.

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

Answer. While not centrally a DOD issue, through a series of partnerships with the Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and sector-specific agencies, DOD supports efforts to anticipate, prevent, and respond to significant cyber incidents on commercial entities. For example, as the lead for the Defense Industrial Base (DIB), DOD helps protect those commercial companies DOD relies on by fostering a cyber-threat information sharing partnership to enhance their cybersecurity capabilities. The DOD should continue to look for ways to better integrate with interagency partners and the private sector.

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

Answer. I understand that in 2016 Secretary Carter and Director Clapper made the recommendation to split the two organizations, once U.S. Cyber Command was mature enough to do so, and that the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff must certify that the six conditions stated in the fiscal year 2017 and Fiscal Year 2020 NDAs must first be met. If confirmed, I would study this question closely to ensure that any decision concerning the dual-hat leadership arrangement between the Director of the National Security Agency and the Commander U.S. Cyber Command is fully informed by thorough analysis and mitigates potential risks to national security and to the operational effectiveness of U.S. Cyber Command and the National Security Agency. If confirmed, I will work with General Nakasone and the Chairman to ensure U.S. Cyber Command has the resources it needs to ultimately meet these maturity requirements.

My understanding is that past Secretaries of Defense directed multiple internal and external assessments regarding the future of the dual hat arrangement. When U.S. Cyber Command was established, the Department believed the dual hat arrangement enabled more effective direction and cooperation in cyberspace, in developing intelligence to support those operations, in sharing capabilities such as the cryptologic platform, and in sharing expertise. In the ten years since U.S. Cyber Command was established, operating and intelligence forces have increased in capability and capacity, and the pace of operations has steadily increased. I understand there are clear benefits to this arrangement. For example, one leader controlling both organizations provides agility and seamless coordination, however, it also may generate risk to both organizations as that same leader is called on to balance priorities of each role and respond to multiple chains of command. If confirmed, I will assess, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of National Intelligence, the pros and cons of this arrangement, in addition to the six conditions the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA states as needing to be met prior to any certification of the decoupling of the dual-hat. Only after making those assessments would I be prepared to fully answer this question, and make any recommendations on the matter.

Question. 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?

Answer. Cybersecurity is central to military readiness and underpins the Department's imperative to secure its critical classified and unclassified information, as well as technologies and programs that enable the lethality of the joint force. If confirmed, I will do two key things. 1) I will drive efforts to recruit, train, and retain our cyber workforce more effectively to better defend our networks. 2) I will improve cybersecurity training, personal responsibility and awareness for the entire workforce. My vision also includes achieving a basic level of digital competency and awareness of artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities for the majority of our workforce to improve the ability of the Department to make data informed decisions.

The Department has created and implemented a Network Cybersecurity Accountability Scorecard to show a specific component's progress in addressing and mitigating key cyber risks to DOD's networks and information systems. Additionally, the Department is developing and piloting a weapons cybersecurity accountability scorecard which will assess selected critical platforms associated with critical defense missions and the Cyber Risk Mitigation Tool to prioritize and track vulnerabilities and mitigations of weapon systems and critical infrastructure. If confirmed, I will ensure these tools meet the Department's needs for improving our cybersecurity performance and will hold senior leaders accountable for improvements in cybersecurity for information systems, critical warfighting platforms, and infrastructure across each DOD Component.

Question. In your opinion, what characteristics of a cyberattack would constitute an "act of war"? Do you consider the recent malware campaign involving SolarWinds 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 strong and tangible response? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Whether a particular cyber activity may be considered an "act of war" requires a case-by-case and fact-specific determination. For example, malicious cyber activities could result in injury, death, or significant property destruction. These activities would need to be considered in their totality.

I understand from a joint statement released by FBI, CISA, ODNI, and NSA that the SolarWinds malware campaign appeared primarily to be an intelligence gathering effort.

There's still a lot more to learn about this breach, but one thing is clear—as President-elect Biden has stated, those responsible for the breach will be held responsible; our adversaries must know that we will not stand idly by in the face of malicious cyber-attacks on our nation.

Any intrusion operation is of great concern to the security of our systems and country. The investigation into the scope of the SolarWinds compromise is ongoing. This is a whole-of-government effort, and I would expect the response will reflect that. If confirmed, I will ensure DOD, in support of the USG-wide effort, takes necessary steps to understand the full scope of this campaign. President-elect Biden has stated that the U.S. will impose "substantial costs" on those responsible for such malicious attacks, including actions in coordination with our allies and partners.

While it does not seem yet that DOD was compromised in the SolarWinds malware campaign, many other critical organizations across the government were actively compromised for the better part of a year, and it took a private sector company to detect the intrusion and alert the government.

Question. What do you conclude from this about the state of our cyber defenses?

Answer. This is an unfolding incident, but the information available today is greatly concerning, as it impacts a wide swath of American public and private networks. Consistent with President-elect Biden's remarks, I believe we must elevate cybersecurity as an imperative across the government in order to defend the American people and U.S. critical infrastructure. Additionally, the government must continue to strengthen its partnership with the private sector to foster greater information sharing and collaboration.

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (SOCOM)

Question. Beginning in fiscal year 2017, successive NDAs have empowered the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD(SOLIC)) to serve as a "service secretary-like" civilian official for special operations forces. Among other reforms, the law defines the administrative chain of command for USSOCOM as running through the ASD(SOLIC) to the Secretary of De-

fense for issues impacting the readiness and organization of special operations forces.

What is your understanding of the Department's progress in implementing the "service secretary-like" responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC)?

Answer. I understand that the Department has taken concrete steps to institutionalize these reforms, to include significant steps in the past few months. If confirmed, I will review the Department's progress to ensure that the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ASD) for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (SO/LIC) has sufficient authorities to execute his or her Military Department Secretary-like responsibilities.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to implementing fully the reforms intended to strengthen the role of the ASD(SO/LIC) within the administrative chain of command for USSOCOM and to provide appropriate oversight of special operations activities (including oversight of policy and resources). I strongly support the role of the ASD(SO/LIC) in providing civilian oversight for special operations activities and in matters relating to the organization, training, and equipping of special operations forces.

Question. In your view, does the ASD(SOLIC) require additional authorities and resources, including additional civilian personnel, to administer oversight of special operations forces?

Answer. I understand that the Department has recently taken steps to provide the ASD(SO/LIC) with additional delegated authorities and resources to administer oversight of special operations forces. The recently enacted National Defense Authorization Act also includes legislation further strengthening the ASD(SO/LIC)'s authorities in this area. If confirmed, I will review the authorities and resources of the office of the ASD(SO/LIC) and recommend any necessary adjustments to help enable the ASD(SO/LIC) to execute his or her statutory responsibilities effectively.

Violent Extremist Organizations

Question. What is your assessment of the threat to United States interests posed by al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and their affiliates and adherents? Which group, in your view, presents the greatest threat to the United States?

Answer. Violent extremist organizations continue to pose a threat to U.S. interests around the globe through robust networks of affiliates and adherents. Although continued pressure from the United States and its Allies and partners has helped prevent these groups from attacking the U.S. Homeland, these groups present localized and regional insurgent threats to our partners and direct threats to U.S. interests. The proliferation of this radical ideology across the internet has expanded the reach of these fringe groups, threatening the Homeland and inciting violence within the borders of our closest allies and partners.

For more than two decades, al Qaeda has been at war with the United States, continually working to attack, disrupt, and destabilize U.S. interests and Western influence. Although the al Qaeda brand has suffered over the past 20 years, due in large part to efforts by DOD, there remains a dedicated network of al Qaeda and its associated forces providing a population-centered counter to United States interests across Africa, the Middle East, and South East Asia. In addition, the self-proclaimed caliphate of the Islamic State has been destroyed. However, ISIS's virulent ideology and open hostility towards Western society remains intact through their adherents across the internet, remaining leaders, foreign terrorist fighters—some who have returned home and others who remain in the region, and the indoctrinated personnel who remain in detention within Syria and Iraq. There is no question that the Islamic State continues to pose a threat to the United States despite the end of its so-called caliphate in Iraq and Syria. The focus of al Qaeda on local conflicts, however, does not mean they have taken their eye off attacking the U.S. Homeland. In the long-term, al Qaeda likely represents the greater and more enduring threat to the United States due to the group's strategic adaptability and trend of decentralization. Should I be confirmed, I will work to ensure neither of these organizations presents an enduring threat to the Homeland or to our allies or partners.

Question. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to the U.S. counterterrorism strategy and DOD's role in supporting it? What metrics would you apply to measure the effectiveness of the strategy?

Answer. As I understand it, combatting terrorism requires a whole-of-government approach that reflects an understanding of and takes into account the root causes of such activities, which are not the same in all regions. In order to provide recommendations to change DOD's role in supporting the U.S. counterterrorism strategy, the Department must perform a systematic, comprehensive, and collaborative

assessment of: terrorist threats; current policy objectives as stated in published guidance; DOD actions to counter that threat; and acceptable risk weighed against objectives not yet achieved. Additionally, assisting partner nations to improve their capability to counter terrorists would remain a key tenet of our strategy. If confirmed, I will direct a review of the current strategy to account for regional consideration and a whole-of-government approach that addresses regional issues.

If confirmed, I would work with senior civilian and military leaders, including where appropriate officials of other agencies, to assess progress toward achieving our counterterrorism objectives. I cannot at this time determine the extent to which standard metrics will be useful such assessments.

Question. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to promote a “more resource sustainable” approach to counterterrorism, as directed by the 2018 NDS?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to draw on successes of both the United States and its partners in developing a counterterrorism coalition representing all facets of government involved in protecting the Homeland from threats. The Department likely requires changes in its plans and processes in order to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness and unity of effort with interagency and international partnerships. Leveraging the lessons learned from past successes, I look to optimize and, where necessary, expand on these relatively small-footprint solutions.

An October 2020 Homeland Threat Assessment highlighted the threat from racially and ethnically motivated violent extremist groups engaging in “outreach and networking opportunities abroad” that “might lead to a greater risk of mobilization to violence, including traveling to conflict zones.”

Question. Do you view the threat from racially and ethnically motivated violent extremist networks overseas as a national security threat? If so, what role do you see for DOD in responding to this threat?

Answer. Terrorist organizations are motivated by a myriad of ideologies, objectives, and causes, and some are racially and ethnically motivated. When the capability, intent, and motivation of any terrorist organization, including racially and ethnically motivated groups, threaten the vital interests of the United States or the shared interests of its allies and partners, then this terrorist organization is a threat to national security.

The Department of Defense (DOD) plays a key supporting role in the U.S. Government’s overall response to terrorist threats. DOD cannot achieve U.S. policy objectives to address terrorist threats unilaterally, and all DOD strategies and plans must be correlated with and complementary to a U.S. Government-wide and international partner-integrated response. The Department must also work with our allies and partners—another key pillar of the current National Defense Strategy—to leverage their regional expertise and unique capabilities. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the enterprise-wide efforts in reform and sustainable counterterrorism approaches to determine if additional opportunities exist.

Section 127e and Section 1202 Activities

Question. Section 127e of title 10, U.S. Code, authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide support (including training, funding, and equipment) to forces and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations for the purpose of combatting terrorism.

Section 1202 of the NDAA for fiscal year 2018 authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide support (including training, funding, and equipment) to forces and individuals supporting or facilitating irregular warfare operations.

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

Answer. The ability to support foreign irregular forces, groups, and individuals under this fiscal authority gives U.S. special operations forces an effective, low-cost option to combat terrorism while maintaining a minimal U.S. footprint. Geographic Combatant Commanders continue to express strong support for this authority as it is a critical component of their counterterrorism efforts. Section 1202 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, as amended, fills a gap in the Department’s ability to provide support to irregular (non-government) forces, groups, and individuals advancing U.S. policy and military objectives short of armed conflict. This authority is particularly helpful in addressing U.S. threats and objectives in current strategic environments that can be described as “grey zones”—spaces between amicable peace and outright war. Authorities such as Section 1202 allow the Department to contribute its special operations capabilities in support of whole-of-government objectives in this competitive space. If confirmed, I would ensure that operations using this authority remain thoroughly coordinated with relevant Chiefs of Mission and Intelligence Community counterparts, and remain fully transparent with Congress on how the Department uses this authority. As the Department

prioritizes great power competition, I could see a need to discuss how these authorities interrelate, and whether there should be adjustments to one or both of them.

Question. If confirmed, what criteria would you use to evaluate proposals for the use of each of these authorities, particularly with respect to mitigating the risks associated with conducting irregular warfare activities below the level of traditional armed conflict?

Answer. I believe appropriate civilian oversight is an integral aspect of implementing these authorities. With respect to Section 1202, if confirmed, I would ensure that all potential uses are suitable, feasible, and acceptable—“suitable” denoting alignment with the Department’s strategy, “feasible” meaning whether the proposed resources are useful to accomplish the mission, and “acceptable” in balancing the risk with any potential advantages gained. For both authorities, if confirmed, I will ensure that selection, screening, and vetting procedures for partner forces continue to be robust and that implementation of these authorities is informed by careful analysis of risks and consistent with U.S. objectives.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Question. What is your assessment of DOD’s ability to conduct effective military operations in the information environment to defend U.S. interests against malign influence activities carried out by state and non-state actors?

Answer. The Department of Defense (DOD) has numerous capabilities routinely employed to conduct effective military operations in the information environment, including cyberspace operations, Military Information Support Operations (MISO), and public affairs (PA). When these activities are executed correctly, DOD can achieve its mission more effectively, more affordably, and with reduced risk to our operating forces. I understand the Department is updating the 2016 Strategy for Operations in the Information Environment and that the update will be informed by a posture review of capabilities, the current defense strategy and its Irregular Warfare Annex, designation of information as a joint function, and statutory requirements in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020. If confirmed, I will support the development and implementation of this strategy.

Question. Are DOD’s efforts in this regard appropriately integrated with other U.S. Government organizations and activities?

Answer. Department of Defense (DOD) efforts throughout the information environment cross traditional department and agency lines. In areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan, where military operations have been ongoing for some time, the integration is fairly seamless, with roles and mechanisms well-established. In other parts of the world, the integration is a bit more complex, and DOD is often not in the lead. If confirmed, I intend to sustain those relationships.

Question. Does DOD have sufficient authorities and resources to conduct these operations effectively? If not, what additional authorities and resources would you request, if confirmed?

Answer. I am not aware of any new authorities required. I understand that the Information Operations posture review being conducted pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 will review capabilities and capacities and inform future integration and resource investments. If confirmed, I will regularly assess our authorities, resource availability and allocation, and strategic alignment, and I will prioritize appropriately to support operations in the information environment.

It is my understanding that the Department is addressing any needs as it works through the posture review.

U.S. STRATEGIC COMMAND

Nuclear Policy

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

What is your understanding of how Russia and China 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?

Answer. I am generally aware of public reporting that both China and Russia continue to invest in their nuclear weapons capabilities. If confirmed, I will undertake a deeper review both of United States nuclear posture as part of the Administration’s formulation of our National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy and of the nuclear weapons capabilities of Russia and China.

Clearly, it is not in the United States interest to see either Russia or China expand their nuclear arsenals. If confirmed, I will undertake a deeper review both of United States nuclear posture as part of the Administration's formulation of our National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy and of the nuclear weapons capabilities of Russia and China and the threat they pose to United States interests.

Question. Do you believe Russia has or is willing to employ nuclear coercion as a means of advancing its foreign policy goals?

Answer. Russia regularly engages in a host of actions that undermine the interests of the United States and its Allies. If confirmed, I will seek a comprehensive understanding of how Russia is using all elements of its national power to challenge United States global interests and domestic stability.

Question. Do you believe that as China completes its build out of a triad of delivery platforms it adheres to the full meaning of "no first use"?

Answer. I believe that it is important that we have a complete understanding of China's intentions and capabilities when accessing the threat it poses to strategic stability and United States interests in East Asia. If confirmed, I will request a comprehensive review of China's nuclear weapons program, including its declaratory policy.

Question. 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? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes, I agree that nuclear deterrence is the Department's highest priority mission and that updating and overhauling our nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority. Our nuclear deterrent has served a vital purpose in U.S. National Security Strategy for the past 70 years and continues to be an essential component of our strategy to preserve peace and stability by deterring aggression against the United States, our allies, and our partners.

Although effective today, U.S. nuclear deterrence remains dependent on aging weapons, delivery systems, infrastructure, and nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) systems originally built during the Cold War. U.S. nuclear weapons have been extended far beyond their original service lives, and the tipping point, where we must simultaneously overhaul these forces, is now here.

Question. 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?

Answer. The United States must retain a secure, sustainable and effective nuclear deterrent for its security and that of its Allies. The United States has long relied on a range and mix of capabilities. If confirmed, I will commit to retaining a robust nuclear deterrent.

Question. Do you believe the current program of record is sufficient to support the full modernization of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, including delivery systems, weapons, command and control systems, and infrastructure?

Answer. I believe that it is critical for the United States to maintain a secure, sustainable and effective nuclear deterrent. The overhaul and updating of the U.S. nuclear arsenal is a critical national priority. If confirmed, I intend to review, early on, the details of the current modernization program to ensure that it is being executed in a cost effective and judicious manner.

Question. What is your understanding of the condition of the U.S. Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) system and what aspects of the NC3 system most need recapitalization or replacement, in your view?

Answer. A robust NC3 system is essential to execute nuclear command and control functions—the situation monitoring, planning, decision making, force management, and force direction. If confirmed, reviewing this system will be a top priority along with addressing critical shortfalls.

Question. Do you believe the governance reforms of the NC3 system have improved DOD's management of the global architecture? Please explain your response.

Answer. I agree that a robust NC3 system is essential to execute nuclear command and control functions. If confirmed, reviewing this system, including the governance reforms, will be a top priority along with addressing critical shortfalls.

Question. Do you believe a major shift in the United States' nuclear policies, such as adoption of a "No First Use" policy, would be appropriate, given Russia's and China's expanding nuclear arsenals? Please explain your answer.

Answer. In keeping with past practice for incoming Administrations, I would anticipate that President-elect Biden will direct the interagency to conduct a thorough set of strategic reviews, including of U.S. nuclear posture. Such a review will certainly need to take into account the challenging international security environment.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense plays an active role in all strategic reviews.

Question. Do you believe a “No First Use” deterrent posture would be consistent with our extended deterrence commitments to our NATO and other regional allies around the world?

Answer. In keeping with past practice for incoming Administrations, I would anticipate that President-elect Biden will direct the interagency to conduct a thorough set of strategic reviews, including of U.S. nuclear posture and declaratory policy. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense plays an active role in all strategic reviews.

Question. The Minuteman III (MM III) Intercontinental Ballistic Missile and the AGM-86B Air Launched Cruise Missile will be in service for over 65 and 55 years, respectively, before they are replaced by the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) and the Long Range Stand-Off (LRSO) weapon. The Air Force has highlighted the pervasive age-related risks associated with the MM III system.

In your view, are there any circumstances under which delaying or cancelling the GBSD and/or LRSO programs would be appropriate, particularly in light of Russia and China’s ongoing efforts to modernize and expand their nuclear forces? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Maintaining a secure, sustainable and effective nuclear deterrent is imperative and is a top U.S. national security priority. If confirmed, I plan to request early on a briefing on the U.S. nuclear modernization program to ensure that it is being executed in a cost effective and judicious manner. I also intend to request a threat briefing on Russia and China’s nuclear weapons programs.

Question. Both the Obama and Trump Administrations deemed the GBSD and LRSO programs essential. If confirmed, would you continue to support and advocate for these programs?

Answer. Maintaining a secure, sustainable and effective nuclear deterrent is imperative and is a top U.S. national security priority. If confirmed, I plan to request early on a briefing on the U.S. nuclear modernization program to ensure that it is being executed in a cost effective and judicious manner.

Question. In 2014, then-Secretary of Defense Hagel directed a comprehensive review of the DOD nuclear enterprise in response to incidents involving U.S. nuclear forces and their senior leadership. Seven years later, DOD and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) have made significant progress in rehabilitating the nation’s nuclear forces and reestablishing the senior leader focus required in this mission area.

If confirmed, what would you do to ensure that DOD and the NNSA continue the investments and senior leader attention needed to modernize all aspects of the nation’s nuclear deterrent and avoid age-driven unilateral disarmament?

Answer. A secure, sustainable and effective nuclear deterrent remains vital to U.S. national security and that of our allies. If confirmed, I will review the U.S. nuclear modernization program as a high priority program and ensure that the program has senior level attention and management. I understand that the recently enacted National Defense Authorization Act and Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act called for strong interagency coordination on these issues, and if confirmed, I will ensure the Department of Defense works closely with the Department of Energy on these programs.

The NNSA and the Nuclear Weapons Council

Question. 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 Nuclear Weapons Council. NNSA’s principal challenge over the next 20 years is to recapitalize and modernize the Cold War-era U.S. nuclear weapons design and production infrastructure into a responsive and resilient enterprise.

Do you support the recapitalization of the NNSA’s capabilities to design, manufacture, and sustain an effective nuclear weapons stockpile, including the two-site solution for restarting plutonium pit production?

Answer. A secure, sustainable and effective nuclear deterrent is vital to U.S. national security and that of our allies. If confirmed, I will review the U.S. nuclear modernization program as a high priority program, including the country’s capacity to produce plutonium pits and other stockpile components. The Department of Defense’s partnership with the Department of Energy on this program is critically important.

Question. Do you support the W80-4 and the W87-1 programs?

Answer. A secure, sustainable and effective nuclear deterrent remains vital to U.S. national security and that of our allies. If confirmed, I will review, early on,

the U.S. nuclear modernization program as a high priority program, including nuclear warhead programs. The Department of Defense's partnership with the Department of Energy on this program is critically important.

Question. Do you support the continuation of the W93 program and parallel efforts to collaborate with the United Kingdom in the maintenance of its independent nuclear deterrent?

Answer. A secure, sustainable and effective nuclear deterrent remains vital to U.S. national security and that of our allies. If confirmed, I will review, early on, the U.S. nuclear modernization program as a high priority program, including nuclear warhead programs. The Department of Defense's partnership with the Department of Energy on this program is critically important.

Question. In your view, does the NNSA's Stockpile Stewardship Program provide the tools necessary to ensure the safety and reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile without explosive testing? If not, what additional authorities and capabilities are needed?

Answer. Yes, the President-elect has committed to maintaining the moratorium on explosive nuclear weapons testing. It is my understanding that since 1992, the U.S. has observed a voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing. Since that time, the investments made in the Stockpile Stewardship Program have developed the personnel, tools, capabilities, materials, components, laboratory and flight testing, and supercomputer modeling and simulation that underpin the annual assessment for safety, security, and effectiveness of the nuclear deterrent without explosive testing. If confirmed, I will look to the advice and judgment of our national security laboratory directors to best understand technical risks in our nuclear stockpile, and recommend adjustments to the current approach if warranted.

If confirmed, I will monitor the Stockpile Stewardship Program through the Nuclear Weapons Council.

Question. What is your understanding of the role of the Secretary of Defense relative to the Nuclear Weapons Council and NNSA's responsibility for maintaining the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile? How would you execute your duties vis-à-vis this role, if confirmed?

Answer. I am aware that the Nuclear Weapons Council is a critical interagency body overseeing issues vital to the U.S. nuclear stockpile. If confirmed, I will request a briefing on the functioning and work of the council in order to ensure that the U.S. maintains a secure, sustainable and effective nuclear deterrent.

If confirmed, I would work with the NWC Chairperson, the Undersecretary for Acquisition and Sustainment, to ensure that NWC decisions are incorporated into Secretary-level reviews, to provide guidance when needed, and to resolve interagency issues as necessary.

Question. If confirmed, how would you leverage the roles played by the Secretary of Energy, the Administrator of the NNSA, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to ensure that annual budgets adequately support the modernization and sustainment of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the Secretary of Energy, the Administrator of the NNSA, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, through the Nuclear Weapons Council's Planning Guidance and Budget Certification Process, to assess the adequacy of annual budgets to support the modernization and sustainment of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.

Arms Control

Question. 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 great instability. The New START Treaty will expire in February unless the United States and Russia agree to extend it.

Do you believe the new strategic-range systems announced by President Vladimir Putin in February 2018 should be included under the New START Treaty's central limits?

Answer. I am generally aware of Russia's nuclear modernization program but am not in a position to speak to the specifics of whether or not individual systems are in compliance with the New START Treaty. I believe, however, that nuclear arms control is in the U.S. interest. If confirmed, I will request an extensive briefing on Russia's nuclear weapons program and the status of the New START Treaty.

Question. Do you believe it to be in the national security interest of the United States to extend the New START Treaty?

Answer. Yes, I do and so does President-elect Biden. Nuclear arms control is in the U.S. national security interest.

Question. What are your views on Russian tactical nuclear forces not covered by the New START Treaty and whether arms control measures can adequately address them?

Answer. Russia's nonstrategic nuclear weapons through arms control is a very important strategic objective. I know that this perspective is shared by the Senate as reflected in the resolution of ratification to the New START Treaty that includes a condition to negotiate an agreement with Russia to address the disparity in United States and Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons.

Question. Do you support unilateral reductions in United States nuclear forces or do you believe that further reductions should be taken only within the context of a formal, verifiable arms control agreement with Russia and other nuclear-armed powers? Please explain your answer.

Answer. I believe it is in the national security interests of the United States and its allies and partners to pursue formal, verifiable arms control agreements that reduce the nuclear threats from Russia and China.

Question. In your assessment, how would delaying or cancelling current nuclear modernization plans and programs affect our arms control negotiation leverage with near-peer and peer competitors?

Answer. The nuclear modernization program is clearly a critical national security priority. If confirmed, it will be critical for me to review the program, begun under the Obama Administration, to ensure that it is being executed in the most cost effective and judicious manner.

Question. Despite decades of reductions in the number of nuclear weapons in the U.S. stockpile, and ongoing efforts to reduce global nuclear threats, the U.S. currently faces a more complex nuclear landscape than at any other point in its history.

Do you believe the United States should continue its longstanding policy of not officially recognizing North Korea as a nuclear power and pursuing denuclearization of the peninsula over the long term?

Answer. I believe that it is in the United States interest to pursue a sustained coordinated effort with allies and others, including China, to advance the shared objective of a denuclearized North Korea. I fully expect the President-elect to direct the interagency to undertake strategic reviews, including on United States policy towards North Korea. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense participates robustly in all strategic reviews.

Question. If so, and if confirmed, what additional steps would you take to ensure continued stability and deterrence of North Korean threats to the United States and its allies in the region until denuclearization can occur?

Answer. One of the greatest advantages the United States has today and in the future is its alliances and partnerships with those who share common national security interests. If confirmed, one of my top priorities will be ensuring United States Forces have what they need to maintain a robust readiness posture in Northeast Asia, in close collaboration with regional allies. Our relationships with important partners such as the Republic of Korea and Japan are critical to regional security and stability and provide a powerful deterrent to North Korean threats.

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

Answer. I am generally aware that the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency has publicly stated that over the next decade, China will likely at least double the size of its nuclear stockpile. If confirmed, I am committed to being briefed on the specifics of China's nuclear weapons program and its threat to United States interests.

Question. In your view, at what threshold condition should future nuclear arms control regimes be expanded to include China's arsenal, as well as that of the United States and Russia?

Answer. In keeping with past practice for incoming Administrations, I would anticipate that President-elect Biden will direct the interagency to conduct a thorough set of strategic reviews, including one on objectives for nuclear arms control and non-proliferation. President-elect Biden has pledged publicly to restore American leadership on arms control and non-proliferation as a central pillar of U.S. global leadership. If confirmed, I would ask for a briefing on China's nuclear weapons program to further inform my judgements.

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

Answer. In keeping with past practice for incoming Administrations, I would anticipate that President-elect Biden will direct the interagency to conduct a thorough set of strategic reviews, including one on objectives for nuclear arms control and non-proliferation. President-elect Biden has pledged publicly to restore American

leadership on arms control and non-proliferation as a central pillar of U.S. global leadership. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense plays a robust role in all strategic reviews.

Question. Certain groups are urging the new Administration to rejoin arms control agreements to which the United States is no longer a party, such as the Open Skies Treaty. To this end, some have advanced legal theories that would permit the President to circumvent the Senate, in which the Constitution vests sole power to approve treaties negotiated by the executive branch.

If confirmed, would you support a decision to circumvent the Senate's exercise of its constitutional responsibilities through the advice and consent process?

Answer. I respect the Senate's constitutional role, including in the treaty-making process. If confirmed, I would work with the State Department and Congress to help ensure the United States is able to pursue international agreements that are in our national interest and are concluded in accordance with the law.

Missile Defense

Question. The United States enjoys a measure of protection against ballistic missile threats from rogue nations like North Korea and Iran, but the threat from Russian and Chinese ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missiles against United States Forces, allies, and the U.S. Homeland continues to grow. The 2019 Missile Defense Review (MDR) codified existing policy on missile defense and endorsed follow-on actions to improve U.S. capability.

Do you believe the MDR should be updated? If so, in what areas?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that an MDR is considered as part of the Administration's formulation of our National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy.

Question. What are your views on the relationship between missile defense and nuclear deterrence?

Answer. The relationship between U.S. missile defense and the U.S. nuclear arsenal is complementary and mutually supportive. Both capabilities contribute to deterring attack on the Homeland, with U.S. nuclear weapons presenting a credible threat of retaliation and U.S. missile defense presenting a credible threat of denying the adversary a successful attack. In addition, both U.S. nuclear weapons and missile defenses provide reassurance to our allies and partners—contributing to our nonproliferation goals while presenting a credible commitment to regional and global security.

Question. If confirmed as Secretary of Defense, what would be your priorities for U.S. missile defense capabilities for the Homeland?

Answer. The United States is currently defended from existing intercontinental missile threats posed by countries such as North Korea by the United States Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS). Specifically, there are 44 ground-based missile defense interceptors—with 40 interceptors located at Fort Greely, Alaska, and 4 interceptors at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. I understand the Department is also examining an architecture for the defense of the Homeland from cruise missile threats, and will identify an organization responsible for development and acquisition of this capability. If confirmed, I would support continuing improvements to our Homeland missile defense architecture.

Question. If confirmed as Secretary of Defense, what would be your priorities for U.S. defense capabilities against cruise and hypersonic missiles?

Answer. As our adversaries have demonstrated through rapid and repeated flight testing, the lines between ballistic and non-ballistic missile threats have become increasingly blurred, most clearly evidenced by the advent of hypersonic missile threats. If confirmed, I would encourage efforts to address the full spectrum of missile threats, including the continued development of integrated air and missile defense architectures for both regional and homeland defense, as well as the accelerated development of intercept capability for hypersonic missile defense.

Question. In your view, what should DOD do to improve the protection of deployed U.S. and allied forces from growing missile threats in operational theaters, particularly from advanced cruise missiles and intermediate range ballistic missiles in Europe and the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. We must continue working together with allies and partners to enhance our regional missile defense efforts in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East. Our cooperation strengthens deterrence and provides assurance essential to the unity of our alliances which are threatened by missile coercion and attacks. Many of our Allies and partners are acquiring advanced maritime and shore land-based air and missile defense systems that will contribute to collective security. If confirmed, I will encourage them to continue these efforts, while seeking opportunities to deepen interoperability with the U.S. and regional partners. These opportunities

include joint exercises that demonstrate both interoperability and our joint resolve to both work together and fight together.

Question. The MDR described the advantages of space-based sensors. In your view, is a space-based sensor layer a required “next step” in enabling a variety of missile defense capabilities, including targeting of advanced threats? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes, space-based sensors are an important tool in enabling a variety of missile defense capabilities. Space-based sensors are required to provide global boost through burn-out tracking of ballistic missiles and for the detection, tracking, and targeting of hypersonic and advanced threats. In addition, space-based sensors support hit and kill assessment of engagements. I understand the Missile Defense Agency is collaborating with the Space Development Agency in the deployment of the National Defense Space Architecture’s Tracking Layer to address hypersonic and advanced threats.

COOPERATIVE THREAT REDUCTION (CTR) PROGRAM

Question. The CTR Program historically focused on accounting for, securing, and eliminating Cold War era weapons of mass destruction and materials in the states of the former Soviet Union. As part of its expansion to other countries, the CTR Program is widening its aperture to include biological weapons and capabilities as well as biological surveillance and early warning, and encouraging the development of capabilities to reduce proliferation threats.

What are your views on the efficacy of the CTR Program?

Answer. I am generally aware that The Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program supports DOD and U.S. objectives of reducing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threats worldwide. I understand the program has delivered significant returns on U.S.-funded investments since the early 1990s. If confirmed, I will work to ensure program efficacy.

Question. How could coordination of the CTR Program across U.S. Government agencies that engage in threat reduction efforts (i.e., the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, and the State Department) be improved?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make clear my expectation—across the Department and for all programs, including the CTR Program—that we need to constantly work to improve and maintain communication across the Federal Government. Constant engagement is invaluable to best-align resources.

Question. Notwithstanding the use and proliferation of chemical weapons documented recently in Libya and Syria, about 60% of CTR resources are allocated to biological programs.

Do you believe this shift in focus to biological programs accurately reflects the current threat?

Answer. I understand the Department has a process to assess WMD threats and prioritize activities and investments accordingly. If confirmed, I look forward to learning about and advancing the Department’s work with partner nations to reduce the threats posed by biological weapons and biological agents.

Question. The CTR program is the primary program in the U.S. Government to work with other countries to build and operate High Containment Biological Laboratories as well as develop safe operating and handling practices. Do you agree that this work is of high importance and if so why?

Answer. I agree fully that safety and security are essential in any context of working with biological agents. If confirmed, I will ensure the CTR Program’s biological threat reduction activities are aligned with DOD and interagency priorities.

Question. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to ensure the CTR program is capable of meeting the mission of rolling back the threat of weapons of mass destruction?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure CTR Program efforts are prioritized, aligned with DOD and interagency priorities to counter weapons of mass destruction, and are tailored to what partner countries are able to absorb and carry forward.

Question. If confirmed, would you recommend adjustment in the allocation of CTR resources? If so, how?

Answer. As I understand it, the CTR program has played an impactful role over the years in mitigating CWMD threats to the Nation. Its activities and resourcing must be reviewed in light of the defense strategy and balanced against other resource requirements across the Department. If confirmed, I will review the current status of the program and recommend adjustments accordingly.

AIR FORCE ISSUES

Question. It has been stated the Air Force is too small and too old to do what the nation asks of it. First, do you agree with this statement?

Answer. Each Service's portfolio of forces and programs are assessed as part of program review. I am aware that the Air Force has several active modernization programs underway which would replace older aircraft and increase the capability of its force to undertake current and projected missions. If confirmed, I will seek the most effective allocation of the Defense Department's resources to include any Air Force modernization and force structure issues.

Question. Second, if confirmed, where do you see the greatest risk in capability and capacity for the Air Force and what actions would you take or direct to mitigate those risks?

Answer. I believe the greatest risk in the Air Force's ability to perform its key missions is presented by the complex anti-access area denial capabilities of competitors such as China and Russia. Air Force modernization must ensure that the service is able to adapt to these challenges. The Air Force also has responsibility for large aspects of nuclear modernization and nuclear command and control, which is an important priority. If confirmed, I would work with Air Force leadership to ensure the Air Force's ability to contribute to critical joint capabilities in line with the defense strategy.

Question. The Air Force is on record as needing to purchase a minimum of 72 fighter aircraft per year to maintain requisite force structure. In your opinion, what is the optimum mix of 4th and 5th generation aircraft required to meet the threat outlined in the 2018 NDS?

Answer. I believe the greatest risk in the Air Force's ability to perform its key missions is presented by the complex anti-access area denial capabilities of competitors such as China and Russia. Air Force modernization must ensure that the service is able to adapt to these challenges. The Air Force also has responsibility for large aspects of nuclear modernization and nuclear command and control, which is an important priority. If confirmed, I would work with Air Force leadership to ensure the Air Force's ability to contribute to critical joint capabilities in line with the defense strategy.

Question. The follow-on modernization of the F-35 is slated to bring key warfighting capabilities to the Air Force, but the schedule and budget of this modernization program remain in flux.

Are you confident in the affordability and executability of the Department's plan for Block 4 Continuous Capability Development and Delivery (C2D2)?

Answer. I am aware that the F-35 Block 4 modernization effort is designed to ensure Joint Force can employ airborne systems effectively in highly contested battle spaces now and in the future. The F-35 joint program office reports to the Office of Secretary of Defense, so I understand the program requires a specific focus from the Secretary's team. If confirmed, I will work with the OSD team and the military services to ensure the success of the F-35 Block 4 modernization effort.

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

I am aware of the critical role that Air Force aerial refueling capabilities play in supporting the joint force. If confirmed I will work with Air Force leadership and the head of Transportation Command to ensure that the Department fields and modernizes the aircraft needed to support the joint force in all operations.

ARMY ISSUES

Army Budget Challenges

Question. While the fiscal year 2022 budget request has not yet been released, some public reports indicate there could be an effort to shift funding from the Army toward building a larger Navy to deter China.

In your view, would this shift of resources make sense from a strategic perspective? Please explain your answer.

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the Department's fiscal year 2022 budget request to ensure it is aligned with the Administration's priorities and balanced across the entire Department to meet defense goals. Competing to win against our adversaries and deterring them from threatening our critical interests requires the combined effects of the full joint force, in coordination with our allies and partners. Each service brings vital and unique capabilities and a shift of resources away from one particular service may have a negative impact. If confirmed, I will address the challenge of providing the President and the American people with a balanced force

able to strategically counter adversary actions in both competition and conflict, and I will seek Congressional support to provide timely, adequate, and sustained funding for the Department.

Question. If confirmed, would you support a decrease in Army end-strength that would accompany any substantial reduction of the Army budget topline? In your view, what would be the effect of such a reduction on Army force structure, readiness, and operations tempo?

Answer. I am committed to reviewing the end-strength of all of the Services and their manpower, equipment, and training, mindful of national security objectives. End-strength reductions must be subject to careful analysis and a clear understanding of strategic impacts and risks. The Army is currently undergoing a major transformation to modernize its forces while simultaneously maintaining a high OPTEMPO to support Combatant Command requirements. Army end-strength should support the Army's efforts to build a modern, lethal force.

Many factors, including end-strength, affect force structure, readiness, and operational tempo. Reductions of end-strength should be rigorously assessed to fully understand how it affects Service and broader Department goals. If confirmed, I am committed to clear prioritization of missions and operational requirements that would be associated with any potential force structure changes to any Service.

Army Modernization Priorities

Question. Budget pressure could impact the Army's ongoing investment in modernizing the force for near-peer competition, deterrence and, if necessary, conflict.

Do you believe the Army must modernize to effectively fulfill the requirements of the NDS? If confirmed, what would you do to ensure the Army is adequately resourced to concurrently maintain readiness, modernize the force, and take care of its people?

Answer. Yes. Many of the Army's combat platforms were originally designed over 40 years ago. While the Army has continued to modernize these platforms, future conflict will likely require capabilities delivered by new designs. Meanwhile, both China and Russia continue to aggressively modernize, and the pace of technological change continues to accelerate. If confirmed, I will work with the Army to assess the progress made on these elements and to field those capabilities that offer important advantages to the joint force in future operations.

Each Service must be adequately resourced to meet the demands of the strategy. If confirmed, I will work with Service leadership to ensure continued emphasis on internal reforms and I intend to be transparent with Congress on our budget decision making process.

Question. In your view, which are the most critical Army modernization priorities, particularly in the context of countering the rapidly increasing threat posed by China?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Army and the other services to determine how the capabilities in the Army's modernization portfolio can contribute to a joint warfighting concept through rigorous analysis and robust experimentation so that we field the right systems on the right timelines. Looking ahead, artificial intelligence and machine learning, a next-generation synthetic training environment, robotics, autonomy, and advanced network sensors will all play increasingly important roles, to include supporting the Army's contributions to Joint All-Domain Command and Control.

Question. How would you evaluate the importance of Army efforts in the Indo-Pacific, including the Army's activation of modernized Multi-Domain Task Forces, to conduct cross-domain operations in support of air and naval forces, in countering China?

Answer. Army efforts in the Indo-Pacific, as part of the Joint Force, are absolutely essential to support successful competition with our adversaries, ensure effective military response to crises, and win in conflict if necessary. We know that ground defense remains a priority for our Allies in the region. The Army is critical to building relationships, establishing logistics footholds and expanding operational reach for the Joint Force.

Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD)

Question. The Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA requires the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Military Departments, to conduct a holistic assessment of current and emerging air and missile threats and the integrated defensive capabilities and capacity required to counter them. It also requires the Secretary of Defense to certify integrated air and missile defense roles and responsibilities.

In your view, are the roles and responsibilities for IAMD appropriately assigned across the Military Services and defense agencies?

Answer. IAMD is inherently a joint endeavor and requires a synchronized approach across the Department. Emerging adversary air and missile capabilities continue to fundamentally alter the way future conflicts will be conducted. Correspondingly the threat requires the Department to thoughtfully and routinely reassess future organizational structures in a global context to address threat capabilities that limit or negate U.S. capabilities to operate and project joint military forces. If confirmed, I will work with the services, the Joint Staff, and civilian leadership to ensure that our approach to IAMD is well integrated and addresses current and future operational needs.

Question. 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?

Answer. Each Military Service provides major contributions to the IAMD mission area, and each must balance those requirements with their service specific missions and priorities. If confirmed, I will work with the services, the Joint Staff, and civilian leadership to ensure that our approach to IAMD, including base defense, is well integrated and addresses current and future operational needs.

If confirmed, I will work with the services, the Joint Staff, and civilian leadership to ensure that our approach to IAMD is well integrated and addresses current and future operational needs as well as addressing IAMD roles and responsibilities.

Question. During his confirmation hearing before this committee, the current Chief of Staff of the Army stated that the Army's purchase of two Iron Dome batteries to address shortfalls in theater base defense capabilities was a "good first step." However, several months ago, the Secretary of the Army stated the Army does not intend to complete the purchase and fielding of two additional batteries by 2023, as required by the fiscal year 2019 NDAA.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure that forward stationed servicemembers have adequate near-term protection, given the expanding number of complex threats to United States bases in the Pacific, Middle East, and Europe?

Answer. I know that our Combatant Commanders work carefully to refine threat estimates within their areas of responsibility and assess impacts of those threats to their operational plans and activities. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that these risks are effectively mitigated through a combination of approaches such as intelligence and surveillance collection for better awareness and early warning, deterrence posture, investment in localized force protection, and active and passive defenses.

Question. Over the last year, the Army was designated as executive agent for the Joint Counter Small Unmanned Aerial Systems Office (JCO), and has made progress demonstrating, testing, and advancing effective counter small unmanned aerial systems (C-sUAS) capabilities for the Joint Force.

If confirmed, would you support continuation of the JCO effort? How would you prioritize and focus efforts across DOD to counter larger UAS?

Answer. The threat posed by sUAS systems is evolving and expanding. If confirmed, I will support efforts, such as those JCO efforts currently underway, that streamline innovation, enhance warfighting capabilities, and simultaneously minimize unnecessary duplication and redundancy.

Counter-UAS is a subset of the larger Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) mission area, which is a Joint effort. The Department is currently addressing the significant UAS threat through Service-specific capabilities. If confirmed, I will examine ways to prioritize and focus DOD efforts working with the Service Secretaries to assist in prioritizing C-UAS efforts across the Department to facilitate greater synergy between the Services.

Question. If confirmed, do you intend to explore options for expanding DOD cooperation with other agencies, such as the Departments of Energy, Justice, and Homeland Security, on C-sUAS capability development and procurement?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review C-UAS capability development and procurement, assess DOD's cooperation with other Federal departments and agencies, and if necessary explore options for expanding cooperation to ensure we achieve our objectives.

Question. The current validated requirement for THAAD batteries is nine, yet only seven batteries are fully manned and equipped, despite the fact that THAAD and Patriot batteries are some of the highest-demand, lowest-density assets in the Army. The fiscal year 2021 NDAA and Defense Appropriations Acts both support procurement of an eighth battery.

If confirmed, what action would you take to ensure that the Army expeditiously acquires the eighth THAAD battery and appropriately plans and budgets for the ninth as soon as feasible?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure the Army works closely with the Missile Defense Agency to acquire sufficient THAAD capability to support the joint force and execute the funding Congress has provided.

Soldier Lethality

Question. Last year's realignment of the Close-Combat Lethality Task Force (CCLTF) from a cross-functional team reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense to an activity under the Department of the Army appears to have de-emphasized this effort, which is critical to the lethality and survivability of formations that traditionally sustain more than 90 percent of combat casualties.

If confirmed, what would you do to ensure the necessary prioritization, manning, and resourcing of the CCLTF? How would you ensure that the CCLTF fulfills its charter to drive materiel and non-materiel innovations for the soldiers, marines, and special operators who comprise our close-combat formations?

Answer. It is my understanding that the CCLTF continues to develop, evaluate, and make recommendations regarding improvements to U.S. squad-level close combat formations, ensuring overmatch against potential threats. This effort is important, and if confirmed, I will ensure that the work of the CCLTF receives appropriate levels of organizational support and resources.

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ISSUES

Question. What is your assessment of the recently published Advantage at Sea: Prevailing with Integrated All-Domain Naval Power? In your view, how well does this strategy nest within the 2018 NDS?

I commend the Naval Services' for working to develop a maritime strategy that supports the National Defense Strategy which focuses on improving joint operations. If confirmed, I will work with the naval services to assess the effectiveness of this strategy and continue development of a joint warfighting concept.

My initial sense is that the Naval Service's Strategy is well aligned with the 2018 NDS's focus on China, and to a lesser degree Russia, as being the most significant threats to U.S. national defense interests. If confirmed, I would want to engage more closely with the Naval Services to understand the detailed implications of the strategy.

Question. Do you believe the Departments of the Army and Air Force should publish similar strategies? If confirmed, what timeline would you seek for such a publication?

Answer. If confirmed, I would welcome discussion with all of the services on strategy development and a joint warfighting concept. I would also encourage perspectives from civilian and policy oversight, as well as joint functions in these matters.

If confirmed, I would first want to gain insights from relevant civilian (OSD) and joint components, as well as the affected Military Services, about the analytic, strategic planning, and other prioritization considerations of pursuing similar efforts. I would also want to ensure that any such follow-on efforts would be well nested with next steps in reexamining, updating, and refining implementation of the National Defense Strategy.

Recapitalizing the Fleet

Question. Despite the Navy's requirement for at least 382 ships, it is currently operating with approximately 297 battle force ships. Additionally, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) concluded that achieving the Navy's fiscal year 2020 30-year shipbuilding plan would require an average \$31 billion per year, one-third more than Navy estimates, and an increase of more than 50 percent compared with recent shipbuilding budgets.

Do you consider the Future Naval Force Study and the Fiscal Year 2021 Shipbuilding Plan released in December 2020 to be appropriate given the current and future strategic environment?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Future Naval Force Study (FNFS) explored a range of future fleet designs capable of meeting today's enduring maritime missions and tomorrow's global security challenges. If confirmed, I will review both the Future Naval Force Study and shipbuilding plan in detail and work with Navy leadership to develop a well calibrated shipbuilding plan.

Question. How would you characterize the risks to national security posed by the current number of battle force ships?

Answer. It is my understanding that the size of the Navy fleet is currently growing as new ships are delivered to the fleet and that the Navy plans to continue this

growth in future budgets. I am also aware that the Navy has experienced recent challenges in ensuring that ships are ready to deploy after maintenance periods and in delivering all necessary training to ship crews prior to deployment. If confirmed, I will review the Navy's assessment of current and future risks in performing its assigned missions, and in supporting the requirements of the joint force, and work with Navy leadership to address those risks.

Improving Government Technical Control in Shipbuilding

Question. A June 2018 Government Accountability Office report found that the last eight combatant lead ships cost a total of \$8 billion more than initially budgeted; were delivered at least six months late; and were marked by dozens of deficiencies. As an example, the first procurement dollar for the *Ford*-class was spent in 2001. More than nineteen years later, procurement dollars continue to be spent to finish construction on the lead ship, USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN-78), which is \$2.7 billion over the original budget estimate, was partially delivered 20 months late, and remains incomplete.

Do you believe acquisition performance on recent lead ships has been satisfactory?

Answer. As I understand it, the lead ship in any class comes with complex challenges, particularly in the areas of technology development and integration, design, ship construction, and testing. Even so, performance on lead ship efforts such as the USS *Gerald R. Ford* and others has given cause for concern. If confirmed, I will assess the Navy's performance on lead ships generally and its plans for upcoming lead ships, understanding that multiple critical lead ship construction efforts are currently underway or in the planning process.

Question. What actions do you believe should be taken or explored to improve on recent lead ship performance, particularly in regard to improving technical foundations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Navy to improve performance on lead ships. I anticipate this will require a strong focus on understanding the technical risks in these ship design efforts and detailed work to effectively manage and retire that risk in a manner that can be validated before potential design flaws are baked in. Having a skilled and trained workforce in our shipyards will also be critical.

Question. Section 125 of the NDAA for fiscal year 2021 directs the Navy to establish a land based engineering site (LBES) for the complex propulsion system of the new *Constellation*-class frigate. This LBES is essential to provide a firm technical foundation for this program, including by reducing risk on lead ship construction and systems integration, facilitating additional shipyard competition, providing lifecycle in-service support, and training of sailors.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that section 125 mandates are executed as required by law?

Answer. I understand the objective of the language of section 125 is to reduce the technical and schedule risk associated with the new *Constellation*-class frigate. If confirmed, I will work with the Navy to ensure a sound risk management approach to the *Constellation*-class as well as other shipbuilding programs.

Ford-class Aircraft Carriers

Question. What is your understanding of the current capability and reliability of each of the key subsystems on the USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN-78), including the Advanced Arresting Gear, Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System, Dual Band Radar, and Advanced Weapons Elevators?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Navy has been working to develop, test, and evaluate these key subsystems to meet the Navy's performance requirements. If confirmed, I would assess the Navy's efforts in these matters as key decisions on the *Ford* and follow-on ships in the *Ford*-class are made.

Question. What is your understanding of the measures being taken to ensure these key systems are stable for the next aircraft carrier, USS *John F. Kennedy* (CVN-79), and those that follow?

Answer. It is important that the learning on key subsystems in the *Ford*-class be applied to the USS *John F. Kennedy* and other ships in the class as soon as practicable. If confirmed, I would assess the Navy's progress on these subsystems as carrier construction issues are brought forward for decision.

In your view, is it still appropriate for the Department to procure large-deck, nuclear-powered carriers and large-deck amphibious ships after CVN-81 and LHA-9? Should the Department conduct a capabilities-based assessment of the future of ships that embark fixed-wing aircraft?

It is my understanding that the Navy and Marine Corps, as well as independent analysts, have conducted studies on capabilities required for future naval warfare. If confirmed, I will work with the Navy and Marine Corps to assess how their fleet

design and modernization plans support the National Defense Strategy and the joint warfighting concept.

The Department should rigorously analyze and assess the capabilities of the entire joint force in addressing the key operational challenges inherent in the missions required to support the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I intend to ensure that this analysis is carried out.

Columbia-class Submarines

Question. Navy leaders have testified that the *Columbia*-class program, the Department of the Navy's top acquisition priority, will require significant investment and will result in equivalent reductions within the Navy budget, if a higher Navy topline or outside funding is not provided.

What is your understanding of the current cost, schedule, and performance of the *Columbia*-class program?

Answer. It is my understanding that the *Columbia*-class program is working actively to meet its scheduled fielding date to sustain the nation's strategic deterrent. In addition to the challenge inherent in this schedule, there are challenges in the submarine industrial base based on how long it has been since the nation constructed a new-design missile submarine as well as the demanding pace of submarine construction. If confirmed, I will work with the Navy to ensure these challenges are carefully managed.

Question. If confirmed, what would be your recommendation for funding the *Columbia*-class program?

Answer. If confirmed, I will assess the requirement for funding for the *Columbia*-class program in the fiscal year 2022 budget proposal.

Question. DOD leaders have testified that the Navy needs to procure 12 *Columbia*-class submarines and avoid schedule delays in the *Columbia*-class program in order to ensure the first deterrent patrol occurs in 2031.

Question. Do you agree that 12 *Columbia*-class submarines will be needed for strategic deterrent patrols to meet requirements of the Strategic Command?

Answer. I am aware that extensive analysis has been done to develop the current plans for the *Columbia*-class program and of the importance of meeting the fielding schedule associated with the projected retirement of the *Ohio*-class in supporting the nation's strategic deterrent. If confirmed, I will work with Navy leadership to ensure the effective execution of the *Columbia*-class program to meet national security requirements.

Question. What is your understanding of mitigation options DOD is considering or should consider in the event the *Columbia*-class program incurs schedule delays that might prevent the lead ship from deploying in 2031?

Answer. I am aware that extensive analysis has been done to develop the current plans for the *Columbia*-class program and of the importance of meeting the fielding schedule associated with the projected retirement of the *Ohio*-class in supporting the nation's strategic deterrent. If confirmed, I will work with Navy leadership to ensure the effective execution of the *Columbia*-class program to meet national security requirements.

Ready Reserve Force (RRF) Recapitalization

Question. DOD has developed a three-pronged recapitalization strategy for the Ready Reserve Force (RRF) and Military Sealift Command surge fleet. This strategy combines new construction, extending the service life of certain vessels, and acquiring used vessels.

What is your understanding of the Navy's recapitalization strategy for the RRF and the affordability of acquiring more than 50 sealift vessels as outlined in the latest 30-year shipbuilding plan?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Navy's Sealift Recapitalization Strategy is outlined in the Navy's 30-year shipbuilding plan. If confirmed, I will review this strategy and work with Congress, Navy leadership, and other stakeholders to ensure sealift requirements are met.

Question. To what extent do you believe the Navy has identified the appropriate mix of used and new ships to continue to meet sealift and auxiliary requirements?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the Navy's Sealift Recapitalization Strategy and work with Congress, Navy leadership, and other stakeholders to ensure sealift requirements are met.

Marine Corps Modernization

Question. The Marine Corps' current concepts for modernization of its amphibious capabilities includes ships, ship-to-shore connectors—such as the Landing Craft Air Cushion—and armored amphibious combat vehicles. Modernization across these systems is complex, technically challenging, and costly.

What is your assessment of the current capability of amphibious maneuver and assault systems in the Navy and Marine Corps?

Answer. The current set of amphibious capabilities, to include warships, aircraft, connectors, and amphibious combat vehicles have served us well, but require modernization to deter peer competitors and fight decisively if deterrence fails. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Congress, Secretary of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps to ensure the Navy and Marine Corps team remains a capable and lethal joint force.

Question. If confirmed, how would you propose to prioritize the development and acquisition of capabilities required for sea basing, connectors, and armored amphibious assault and tactical mobility ashore to achieve a full spectrum capability in the Marine Corps?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of the Navy, along with Marine Corps and Navy leadership to ensure that naval force have the capabilities they need to fight and win today and in the future. This includes a review of the current set of priorities to ensure joint access in an anti-access area denial (A2AD) environment.

Question. In your view, what is necessary to ensure that modernization of the amphibious force—ships, connectors, and vehicles—is achievable and affordable in the near and long term?

Answer. First and foremost, the Department's investment strategy must be predictable, clear, and aligned with its strategy. Funding that is timely, adequate, predictable, and sustained provides the Department the ability to acquire, train with, and employ Naval combat power across the full spectrum to be successful against threats outlined in the strategy.

Question. If confirmed, would you support the continued execution of the Defense Posture Realignment Initiative (DPRI), including the realignment of some United States Marines from Okinawa to Guam and the build-up of facilities at other locations, such as Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the implementation of the realignment plan known as the Defense Policy Review Initiative, understanding it is the bilaterally-determined way forward. The realignment of Marine Corps forces on Okinawa and the main islands of Japan, including the establishment of a strong presence on the United States territory of Guam, supports our effort to achieve an improved Indo-Pacific defense posture. The Department of Defense working with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the Military Departments and Services, and the Department of State must proactively adapt and adjust U.S. access and joint presence to the realities of great power competition to ensure our posture is optimized for deterrence of adversaries, ally and partner assurance, and warfighting, if necessary. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to ensure that our posture plans are consistent with the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and other relevant plans, policies, and agreements.

Question. Last year the Commandant of the Marine Corps released a new strategy reorienting the Marines to be more directly part of the integrated naval force, with a focus on China.

Do you believe that General Berger's new strategy for the Marine Corps is correct, and that the divestiture of end-strength and ground combat capabilities such as tanks and artillery is appropriate? What, if any, modifications to this strategy would you recommend?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the Marine Corps' strategy and work with General Berger to ensure his forces are strategically aligned.

I would not recommend any modifications to the strategy at this time. If confirmed, I will seek to work with the Secretary of the Navy, the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Congress to review and implement the strategy.

REFORM OF DOD BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Management Reform

Question. Reform of DOD business operations is the third pillar of the 2018 NDS. If confirmed, what specific new actions would you take and what ongoing actions would you continue to initiate and accelerate the meaningful reform of DOD business operations, processes, and systems?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue the Department's efforts to achieve a clean audit opinion on its financial statements. The process of undergoing an audit drives discovery, transparency, and business process discipline that yields significant positive results for the Department. Also, having accurate, actionable business data is essential to running any large organization. I understand the Department has developed a single common 'data lake' that is used to provide real time information on financial, HR, security, acquisition and readiness status, which I will continue to use to manage and reform the Department. Now that we have the data—no small

feat—we need to use the data to drive and support our decision making. The Department has too many information technology systems that perform similar functions. These need to be reduced and rationalized. If confirmed, I would require the Services and Defense Agencies/Field Activities to migrate from legacy systems to modern systems that already exist inside the Department or elsewhere in government wherever possible instead of developing new capabilities internally. DOD has a long history of not making optimal investments in business systems, and now is the time to capitalize on the expertise that exists in the civilian side of government.

Question. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to improve the governance and performance accountability of the so-called “Fourth Estate”?

Answer. The elimination of the Chief Management Officer position by the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA requires the Department to re-think its approach on governance generally, including the Fourth Estate. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Deputy Secretary and other senior leaders across the Department on that, if confirmed. My goal is a Department that is both effective and efficient.

Question. The Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA eliminated the Chief Management Officer (CMO) position.

If confirmed, how would you approach the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA tasking to reallocate the responsibilities of the Chief Management Officer?

Answer. If confirmed, I would approach it in two ways: what has worked well before, and where we need to do better. For the “Pentagon Reservation” functions in CMO, I would rely on what has worked well before. For example, I would consider re-establishing the position of Director of Administration and Management (DA&M). For the business/management reform functions in CMO, I believe we can do much better linking budgeting and performance. I believe the business reform duties at the core of the CMO’s portfolio should be performed by existing, respected, and highly capable staff offices in OSD. These are, primarily: the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer; the Director, Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation; and the DOD Chief Information Officer. Importantly, I would employ well understood processes that the Pentagon knows and regularly uses—for example, the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution cycle—to drive a management reform agenda and improve the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Department.

Digital Modernization

Question. The Department expends significant resources on information technology and related services, yet remains highly reliant on slow legacy systems and enterprise infrastructure, and on personnel intensive workarounds for critical operating functions such as personnel, financial management, logistics, and acquisition. Not surprisingly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, DOD struggled to enable the total force to work remotely in a persistent and secure fashion, incurring health and safety risks that should not have been necessary had the Department not repeatedly deferred investments in digital modernization initiatives.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to prioritize and resource digital modernization initiatives such as secure enterprise-wide cloud, teamwork, and collaboration tools, as well as senior leader decision support initiatives like advanced analytic capabilities (ADVANA)?

Answer. The Department has made notable progress toward Digital Modernization, but much remains to be done. Modernizing the hardware and software DOD’s digital systems rely on will increase its efficiency, its ability to be resilient in the face of a cyberattack, be more cost effective over time, and ensure the total force has secure and resilient access to the information it needs anywhere in the world. The COVID challenge clearly demonstrated the critical role of modern cloud-based collaboration tools in allowing the Department to successfully perform its mission without interruption. Enterprise cloud is foundational to the Department’s ability to rapidly and securely develop and deploy advanced software. Our weapon systems increasingly depend upon software to ensure our competitive advantage over near peer adversaries. If confirmed, I will organize DOD to ensure continued progress toward Digital Modernization. Analytic capabilities like ADVANA are empowering senior leaders to use standardized data to inform policy and make better decisions. If confirmed, I am committed to continue to use such analytic capabilities to better operate and manage the Department.

Question. Has your experience with defense industry and private industry engendered an appreciation for modern management tools and systems that you would seek to implement at the Department of Defense, if confirmed?

Answer. Industry managers must be adept at setting clear goals, measuring value creation in their products and processes, and making decisions based on objective, data-driven measures of performance. If confirmed, I would accelerate the progress

the Department has made using data management and executive analytics tools to ensure that DOD's decisions are driven by relevant and timely access to standardized data and a shared operational picture.

Question. Former Secretary of Defense Mark Esper took a personal interest in modernizing the DOD CHARRTS software system used to manage congressionally-required reports.

Given your significant and recent military service, what are your views on the efficacy of the processes and systems used to manage congressional reporting requirements?

Answer. I understand that, recently, congressional and DOD staff have been working to modernize the reporting process, and streamline both the way Congress identifies items requiring Department reporting, as well as the reporting process itself. I understand the importance of the reporting process and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on this process.

Question. In your view, how can the DOD processes and systems—including CHARRTS—for managing engagements with, and the flow of information to Congress writ large, and the congressional defense committees more specifically, be improved?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Congress and the Department have begun collaborating on technologies to enhance the flow of information between the Congressional defense committees and the Department through an online, cloud-based, exchange portal to track reporting requirements from inception by the committees, through assignment and completion by the Department, with a goal of enhancing the timeliness and transparency of the process for all stakeholders. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on this process.

DOD AUDITABILITY

Question. Since 1995, DOD's financial management has been on the Government Accountability Office's High-Risk List, identified as vulnerable to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. Over the past several years, DOD undertook a department-wide financial audit, despite not being audit-ready, and has made significant progress toward auditability. The Department is now targeting 2027 to achieve an unqualified or clean opinion.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to maintain the significant momentum achieved in auditability over the past several years at the Department of Defense?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure the Department has actionable and achievable plans in place to keep making progress toward an unmodified audit opinion. All leaders—military and civilian, operator or supporter—will be held accountable for collaborating and completing, in a timely manner, these plans and roadmaps. I will expect my Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) and other DOD leaders to work together to address and reduce the findings from the most recent audit and to continue the recent progress in the use of data analytics as an important tool in this effort.

Question. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take or direct to achieve better outcomes than have past initiatives intended to improve DOD auditability?

Answer. The tone set by leadership at the top is critical to accomplishing goals. There is a history of the Secretary of Defense establishing priority areas for audit remediation. If confirmed, I intend to continue that advocacy. I will reinforce leadership's engagement and focus on these audits. Better outcomes occur when we leverage our auditor's feedback to prioritize corrective actions that bring the greatest value to our operations and warfighters. Better outcomes also occur when leaders are accountable to the results of these audits, and, if confirmed, I will lead them through this important task. What gets measured also gets done, so if confirmed, I will monitor and push for progress by using and emphasizing metrics that enable the Department to quantify progress throughout the year.

Question. How does the DOD audit contribute to operational readiness, in your view?

Answer. The value of audit is not so much in DOD being able to say it has a clean audit opinion, but in the audit recommendations that bring insight into how the Department can improve its operations. The audit process can improve the Department's operations on many levels—in the form of more reliable information for decision-making, improved inventory management, and cybersecurity. With time, I expect that the value and contributions that flow from the audit will grow. Our audit efforts should lead to strengthened internal controls, streamlined business processes, improved visibility of assets and financial resources, and increased transparency and accountability. All of this makes the Department more effective.

Acquisition Reform

Question. Recent NDAA's have enacted sweeping reforms to the Department's acquisition organizational structures and systems, including introducing new acquisition flexibilities and delegating significant acquisition authority to the Services.

In your view, what are the key tenets of the Department's new Adaptive Acquisition Framework and does it effectively implement the reforms directed by Congress? If not, what additional changes in the defense acquisition system are needed?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Department of Defense Adaptive Acquisition Framework implements the following tenets: (a) Empower program managers (PMs); (b) Simplify acquisition policy; (c) Employ tailored acquisition approaches; (d) Conduct data driven analysis; (e) Actively manage risk; and (f) Emphasize product support and sustainment. If confirmed, I will work with my staff and the services to ensure that Department policy is fully aligned with these tenets and effectively implements the reforms needed in the defense acquisition system.

It is my understanding that recent reforms have allowed the Department to engage effectively in rapid prototyping and expand access to new partners in industry. At the same time, the fielding of new capabilities continues to proceed at a slower pace than is required to address the challenges the Department faces and the development of new entrants in the generation of defense capability is suboptimal. Acquisition of services and software remain challenging and implementing sound cybersecurity throughout the acquisition system and the weapon systems it produces is a major need. If confirmed, I will work closely with my staff and the services to continue to improve the defense acquisition system along these fronts and in other areas.

Question. Recognizing that the Adaptive Acquisition Framework represents a significant change in DOD acquisition policy and process, what steps would you take, if confirmed, to ensure it is successfully adopted throughout the Department?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, and the Military Departments' Senior Acquisition Executives to ensure that we have the necessary policies in place to implement and institutionalize reforms in the defense acquisition system and to ensure its effective operation.

Question. Given the delegation of significant acquisition authority to the Military Services, what do you believe to be the respective roles of the Secretary of Defense, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, and the Service Acquisition Executives in ensuring acquisition programs deliver promised capabilities to the end user on time and on budget? If confirmed, who would you hold accountable for large-scale acquisition failures?

Answer. I believe the role of the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and the Service Acquisition Executives, as well as the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering is to operate collaboratively, consistent with their statutory responsibilities, to ensure the effective operation of the defense acquisition system.

Problems with acquisition can arise from many factors, including overly ambitious requirements, immature technologies, and poor planning and/or execution by government or contractor teams. If confirmed, I would assume ultimate responsibility and accountability for the stewardship of the resources the American taxpayer invests in the Department. I expect to work closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and the Military Service or Component acquisition executives to monitor and improve program performance. Accepting and managing risks is a necessity to deliver needed capabilities. When there are failures, we should learn from them, identify root causes, and move on from the program if a better alternative can be identified.

Question. In your view, what are the most significant acquisition and contracting challenges facing the Department today? What additional acquisition or related reforms would you recommend and implement to address those challenges, if confirmed?

Answer. Working with defense contractors to protect critical information and implementing appropriate cybersecurity measures are significant challenges. If confirmed, I look forward to addressing the need to protect critical information and implement appropriate cybersecurity measures, including working with the Congress. This needs to be a priority for DOD's acquisition and contracting community. In implementing these important authorities, we must balance the absolute need to secure our systems, with the impact to cost, schedule and performance in implementing these measures.

If confirmed, I will work with the OSD staff and the services to identify improvements to the acquisition system in areas with continuing challenges. In addition to those areas I previously identified, developing the acquisition workforce will be a top priority. I will also ensure that the Department works closely with Congress on these issues.

Many acquisition experts attribute past failures of defense acquisition programs to a cultural bias that routinely produces unrealistic performance expectations and overly optimistic cost and schedule estimates.

Question. What is your understanding of the tools available to the Secretary of Defense to identify and direct appropriate trade-offs between cost, schedule, and performance requirements early and regularly throughout the acquisition process?

Answer. It is my understanding the Department of Defense's policies, including DOD Instruction 5000.02, the Federal Acquisition Regulation, and the use of Other Transaction Authority agreements, provide the Department with significant flexibility to tailor cost, schedule, and performance. A key factor in leveraging these tools successfully is having knowledgeable officials in place on the OSD staff and in the services as well as across the acquisition workforce. If confirmed, I would work with the Congress to continue to refine these policy tools and to ensure that we have the talent we need in the defense acquisition system.

Question. The rapid pace with which our adversaries field technological change demands a DOD acquisition system that can innovate, adapt, and respond to new threats and opportunities.

In your view, how should the Department define and manage concepts like risk and failure so that program managers can try new technologies and concepts, learn what does and does not work, and more quickly drive technological advancement?

Answer. Risk management is a technical and cultural challenge. If confirmed, I will work with acquisition and sustainment and research and engineering leadership in OSD and in the military services to ensure risk is understood and that the acquisition workforce is encouraged to manage risk effectively. It is my understanding that effective management of risk is part of the reason the USD(R&E) was established in the first place: to help foster a culture of innovation. If confirmed, I would expect USD(R&E)'s efforts, in coordination with those of the USD(A&S), to complement each other and foster adoption of new technologies and concepts with appropriate management of risk.

Requirements

Question. One of the challenges facing many acquisition programs—ranging from weapons systems to business systems—is unrealistic, unfeasible, unstable, and unaffordable requirements.

What best practices can the Department employ to generate realistic and feasible requirements, particularly in sophisticated, rapidly-evolving technical areas, and given that software increasingly defines the capability?

Answer. Dynamic approaches to requirements generation in a mission engineering context, as well as insights from prototypes, experiments, and pilots aligned with the Department's modernization priorities and the National Defense Strategy should continuously shape requirements and designs. These approaches that actively engage users, and allow rapid iterative insertion of emerging technologies. If confirmed, I will work with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and others to encourage these types of approaches.

Question. In your view, how well does the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) draw upon and use input from the systems engineering; cost analysis; and programming, planning, and budgeting communities in its requirements deliberations? How would your experience inform your future oversight of the JROC?

Answer. It is my understanding that the JROC includes representatives from the engineering, cost estimation, and budgeting communities in its deliberations. I am also aware that the current Vice Chairman is working to reshape the JROC's focus around key requirements of a joint warfighting concept. If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff, the services, and civilian leadership to ensure that our requirements process supports the development of the capabilities needed to execute the strategy.

During my time as the Army Vice Chief of Staff from 2012 to 2013, I was a member of the JROC, so I am fully aware of its strategic and day-to-day tasks. If confirmed, I will maintain appropriate oversight of its critical responsibilities for the joint force through the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and work with them to implement the strategy.

Question. Title 10, U.S. Code establishes the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, acting as the Chairman of the JROC, as the primary adviser to the Chairman and the Secretary of Defense on requirements. In this context, the law author-

izes the Vice Chairman to establish requirements without the consensus of the JROC as a whole. This reform was intended to improve support for joint warfighting requirements and missions that may not be of sufficient priority for the Military Services.

What are your views on these reforms?

Answer. I am broadly comfortable with the statutory framework undergirding the work of the JROC. If confirmed, I will review the JROC's efforts to better align its approach to the requirements process around key elements of the joint warfighting concept, and work with the Joint Staff, the services, and civilian leadership to ensure that our requirements process supports the development of the capabilities needed to execute the strategy.

Defense Industrial Base

Question. In recent years, Congress, industry, and DOD have increasingly expressed concerns about the health of the defense industrial base and its ability to reliably meet defense needs, coupled with an interest in "on-shoring" industrial activity. The NDAA for fiscal year 2021 seeks to address these issues, in part, by establishing an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy.

What do you assess to be the most significant challenges facing the defense industrial base? How would you address these challenges, if confirmed?

Answer. A number of weaknesses exist in the defense industrial base. They include: workforce stability, financial health, cyber exploitation, a reliance on sole or single source suppliers, reliance on foreign sources (including adversarial sources), and vulnerabilities to predatory and adversarial capital investments. COVID-19 has highlighted previously unknown industrial base risks, created new risks, and exacerbated existing vulnerabilities. These impacts have been visible across businesses of all sizes and their supply chains.

A robust defense industrial base is critical to supporting the Warfighter. If confirmed, I will assess the vulnerabilities in the defense industrial base and strategically invest in programs such as Defense Production Act Title III to address them. I will ensure implementation of statutory authorities, including those related to the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, to protect American technology and know-how from adversarial foreign capital. Further, if confirmed, I will focus efforts to ensure that all companies within the defense industrial base have access to tools to combat cybersecurity threats. I will also work within the DOD to strengthen activities with small business, and with allies and partners, to support policies that foster collaboration, competition, and innovation, to ensure a vibrant defense industrial base.

Question. What steps should the Department take—on its own or as part of a whole-of-government approach—to increase domestic industrial capacity and reduce reliance on suppliers in China?

Answer. The President-elect has identified increasing domestic industrial capacity as a top priority and a priority across U.S. Government agencies. The Department of Defense has substantial investments in research, development, production of major weapon systems, procurement of supplies, and other support efforts related to national security requirements that spur industrial activity and private investment. If confirmed, I will support a whole-of-government approach to ensuring we have the domestic industrial capacity needed to meet defense requirements and support the economy. DOD can leverage its authorities and programs to onshore capacity and capability in certain areas and collaborate with allies and partners to leverage their unique capabilities.

Question. If confirmed, what would you establish as the key priorities of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will look into this area in more detail. However, I will focus efforts on a number of critical and timely challenges. This includes ensuring that the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy is supporting the critical industrial base challenges I noted earlier, including the whole-of-government approach to fighting COVID-19 and its disruptions.

TEST AND EVALUATION

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

If confirmed, how would you approach your relationship with the Director, Operational Test and Evaluation, particularly in light of the independence and direct reporting relationships and responsibilities accorded the Director in law?

Answer. The success of the Armed Forces depends upon the objective, unvarnished information and assessments the Director, Operational Test and Evaluation (DOT&E) provides. If confirmed, I will respect DOT&E's independence, granted by Congress in statute, and look forward to working closely with DOT&E to ensure that our warfighters receive the most capable and safest systems possible.

Question. The Major Range and Test Facilities Base (MRTFB) and DOD's associated test and evaluation infrastructure are critical national assets. In recent years it has become clear that digital engineering and digital modeling and simulation tools and infrastructure will be critical to achieving the Department's objectives for optimizing existing legacy weapons systems and facilitating the delivery of modern software-defined capabilities.

Based on your past experience in DOD and in the defense industry, are you satisfied with DOD's test and evaluation capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforces and infrastructure of the Military Services?

Answer. In my experience, DOD's T&E community has contributed substantially to producing the world's most effective fighting force, the U.S. Military. The technology available to us and our adversaries and the methods of employing that technology are evolving at an incredible pace. If confirmed, I believe a review of our T&E infrastructure, tools and workforce is necessary to ensure that they are ready for the systems we intend to field and the threats we expect to face.

Question. If confirmed, in which areas, if any would you require the Department to develop new test and evaluation capabilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I believe a thorough review of DOD's T&E capabilities and workforce would be prudent. The results of this review would inform my decisions regarding T&E investment. DOD must be prepared to test and evaluate current and emerging systems and technology. Critical areas to assess include our national space test and training capability, our capability to test hypersonic weapons, directed-energy platforms, and autonomous and artificial intelligence-based systems; and our test and evaluation capabilities for software systems and cybersecurity.

Question. Under what conditions should other U.S. Government agencies (Federal, State and local), allied foreign governments, and defense contractors be permitted to use the MRTFB?

Answer. DOD organizations must have priority for use of the Major Range and Test Facility Base. If confirmed, I would support robust interagency cooperation whenever possible and I envision many mutually beneficial opportunities, particularly in the areas of space, cyberspace and electromagnetic spectrum, for partnership with other government agencies. Strengthening partnerships with our international allies will be at the top of my agenda. That will include improving their warfighting capabilities and supporting our forces' interoperability through opportunities for via testing and training at U.S. facilities.

DEFENSE SECURITY COOPERATION

Question. What should be the primary objectives of Department of Defense security sector assistance activities, in your view?

Answer. The Department's primary objective for security sector assistance efforts should be to enhance the capabilities and capacity of our partners to provide for their own defense and enable partners to address regional security challenges—to advance shared security interests. Working with the Department of State, the Department of Defense's security sector assistance tools are a linchpin in maintaining and leveraging the United States' robust constellation of allies and partners, which are vital to achieving U.S. objectives abroad.

Question. Is the Department of Defense appropriately organized and resourced to execute security sector assistance effectively? If not, what changes would you make or direct, if confirmed?

Answer. Congress has provided the Department sufficient authorities to address capability and capacity shortfalls among allies and partners to ensure partners are able to operate alongside or in lieu of U.S. Forces. It is my understanding that the Department has made significant strides in recent years through aligning security cooperation activities with National Defense Strategy (NDS) objectives and utilizing the full range of available authorities for building partner capacity. If confirmed, I will build upon this progress and explore innovative ways to leverage security cooperation resources as a key element in advancing defense strategic objectives.

I appreciate the Title 10 Chapter 16 tools Congress has provided to the Department and the continued support toward improving the execution of security cooperation efforts. If confirmed, I will advise the Committee of any additional legislative or organizational changes that I conclude are necessary to execute this mission as effectively and efficiently as possible.

BASE REALIGNMENT AND CLOSURE (BRAC)

Question. It has been noted repeatedly that the 2005 BRAC round resulted in major and unanticipated implementation costs and saved far less money than originally estimated.

Do you believe that another BRAC round is needed? If so, what changes to law and implementation policy would you recommend to improve on the outcomes of the 2005 BRAC process?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my senior advisors and the Military Department leaders to determine whether authorization for a BRAC round is something to consider in the future as we shape priorities.

The BRAC process is recognized as fair, objective, and a proven process for closing and realigning installations in the United States. That said, I understand that Congress has expressed concerns about the 2005 BRAC round. If confirmed, I will assess the need for changes to law or policy to address congressional concerns with the 2005 BRAC round. The key will be maintaining the essence of the BRAC process: treating all installations equally, all or none review by both the President and Congress, an independent Commission, the priority of military value, and a clear legal obligation to implement all of the recommendations in a time certain together with all the authorities needed to accomplish implementation (specifically the authority to undertake military construction necessary to implement recommendations).

Question. If you are confirmed, and were Congress to authorize another BRAC round, how would you set priorities for infrastructure reduction and consolidation across DOD?

Answer. If confirmed, and if Congress were to authorize a new BRAC round, I would work with my civilian and military experts to determine the priorities to be addressed by that round.

Question. What is your understanding of the responsibilities for working with local communities with respect to property disposal that would vest in DOD and the Military Services, were Congress to authorize another BRAC round?

Answer. If confirmed, and if Congress were to authorize another BRAC round, I would consult with the Department's experts on this matter.

OPERATIONAL ENERGY AND ENERGY RESILIENCE

Question. The Department defines operational energy as the energy required for training, moving, and sustaining military forces and weapons platforms for military operations, including the energy used by tactical power systems, generators, and weapons platforms. As early as 2004, then-General Mattis testified before Congress that DOD must "unleash us from the tether of fuel" if U.S. Forces are to sustain momentum and retain freedom of maneuver. He cautioned that "units would be faced with unacceptable limitations because of their dependence on fuel" and resupply efforts "made us vulnerable in ways that would be exploited by the enemy." Today, DOD energy requirements are projected to increase significantly due to technological advances in weapons systems and distributed operations over longer operating distances.

If confirmed, what would you do to harness innovations in operational energy and link them with emerging joint operational concepts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work across OSD, the Joint Staff, the Services, the Combatant Commands, and industry to enhance the energy resilience of the Joint force. That includes investing in energy RDT&E and incorporating energy resilience into emerging joint operational concepts through exercises, wargames, modeling and simulation, and other means.

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

Answer. DOD must consider the supportability of our energy requirements in contested and competitive operating environments, including the Homeland, as well as how changing geopolitical conditions affect energy supplies. If confirmed, I will review how well the Department is incorporating energy considerations into all aspects of the strategic planning process.

Question. How can DOD acquisition systems better address requirements related to the use of energy in military platforms? In your view, should energy supportability be a key performance parameter in the requirements process?

Answer. DOD does not and will not have uncontested access to unlimited energy, from the Homeland to forward deployed locations. If confirmed, I will work with my staff to ensure the acquisition system values and enhances the energy supportability of future platforms and operations.

It is my understanding that energy supportability is already a key performance parameter, by statute. If confirmed, I will ask the acquisition and energy experts, in coordination with the Joint Staff, to update me on the implementation of the energy supportability key performance parameter, and recommend any necessary improvements.

Question. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to prioritize energy resilience and mission assurance for DOD, including acquiring and deploying sustainable and renewable energy assets to support mission critical functions and address known vulnerabilities?

Answer. In order to achieve their missions, our warfighters must have assured access to energy that is resilient to all hazards and threats. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department considers a full range of resilient, cyber-secure, and sustainable energy solutions, including renewable energy technologies, to meet the needs of mission critical functions.

Question. Section 2805 of the Fiscal Year 2017 NDAA accorded the Secretary of Defense the authority to plan and fund military construction projects directly related to energy resiliency and energy security.

If confirmed, for what types of construction projects would you leverage section 2805 authorities to enhance mission assurance?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that the DOD utilizes all available authorities, including section 2805, in an integrated and holistic manner to strengthen its mission assurance posture. Solutions may include microgrids, distributed on-site generation (such as renewable energy), and battery energy storage systems, among others, to improve mission assurance at our installations.

ENVIRONMENT

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that DOD and the Military Services comply with environment protection laws, regulations, and guidance from the Environmental Protection Agency?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure the Department of Defense complies with environmental regulations, laws, Executive Orders, and EPA guidance while meeting its mission responsibilities.

If confirmed, how would you structure investments in DOD's Environmental Research Programs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will structure the Department's environmental research programs to address the highest priority issues facing DOD and to support Administration priorities.

Question. What are your ideas for improving DOD collaboration with the Department of Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to find cooperative ways to ensure military readiness, while protecting the environment on and around military installations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will collaborate with all relevant Federal, State, Tribal, and local stakeholders, including the Department of Interior and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, towards conservation outcomes that support our mission requirements; sustain resilient landscapes on and around military installations and ranges; and conserve our nation's natural and cultural heritage now and into the future.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that DOD and the Military Services comply with environmental protection laws, regulations, and guidance from the Environmental Protection Agency? Please explain your answer.

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Services to ensure the Department has the policy, organization, training, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities to comply with all environmental requirements.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINANTS

Question. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), DOD has identified more than 400 military installations affected by known or suspected releases of Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).

If confirmed, what actions would you take to address PFOS/PFOA contamination on DOD installations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure the DOD PFAS Task Force proactively addresses PFAS concerns, and aggressively pursues a PFAS-free firefighting agent.

Question. If confirmed, what would be your approach to addressing the health concerns of servicemembers and their families regarding alleged exposures to potentially harmful contaminants on U.S. military installations and in the context of performing military duties?

Answer. Nothing is more important than the health and well-being of our people and their families. If confirmed, I will make sure health concerns that are reported

are promptly reviewed, investigated, and mitigated when necessary. I will direct Department of Defense officials to work with the EPA and the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure we are taking care of servicemembers and their families. I will also work for a more proactive approach to protecting the environmental quality of installations for our servicemembers, their families, and the communities that support them.

READINESS AND RESOURCE IMPACTS FROM EXTREME WEATHER

Question. Over the last few years, hurricanes have resulted in more than \$10 billion in damage to military installations across the U.S.

How would you assess the readiness and resource impacts on DOD from recent extreme weather events?

Answer. Severe weather and other climate change-related disasters have degraded DOD's ability to operate and train at certain installations, imposing significant costs. If confirmed, I will work with Department leadership, the Joint Staff, and the Military Services to develop a full understanding of the national security implications of extreme weather and climate change, taking a comprehensive approach that includes impacts on operations, readiness, installations, equipment, infrastructure, and force development.

Question. Based on these readiness and resource impacts, do you believe it necessary to use more resilient designs in DOD infrastructure?

Answer. Yes. It is common sense, cost effective, and arguably necessary to promote resilience in DOD infrastructure and supporting communities. If confirmed, I will work with DOD leadership to ensure our standards continue to improve.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION

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

If confirmed, would you make any changes or adjustments in current DOD modernization priorities?

Answer. I understand the current list of modernization priorities has been drawn directly from the National Defense Strategy, with input from stakeholders across the DOD enterprise. I would be open to revisiting these priorities as technology evolves and new challenges and opportunities are identified.

Question. What do you see as the most significant challenges (e.g., technical, organizational, or cultural) to DOD's development of these key technologies?

Answer. I believe the Department faces a significant challenge in accelerating our adoption of new technology in ensuring that new capabilities make their way quickly from the lab into the hands of warfighters, while at the same time balancing the sustainment needs of our legacy systems. If confirmed, I will continue efforts to speed the transition of new technologies from concept to prototype to fielded capability.

Question. Are the Department's investments in these technologies appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all Military Departments and Agencies?

Answer. The Fiscal Year 2017 NDAA reestablished and elevated the USD(R&E) to focus strategically on the integration and synchronization of technology development programs across the Department. If confirmed, I will support the USD(R&E) in ensuring that the Department's technology investments are appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all military departments and Agencies.

Question. In addition to the technologies identified in the 2018 NDS, are there other technology areas in which you believe DOD must invest to ensure that the United States maintains its technological superiority in the long-term?

Answer. Yes, and that is reflected in the fact that the Department's research portfolio is much broader than the modernization priorities. The Department invests in a broad portfolio of technologies to drive future capability improvements and to create technological advantage. For example, areas such as advanced materials, propulsion, software engineering, and electronic warfare are now, and will continue to be, key enablers.

Question. Given your experience in both DOD and the private sector, is DOD applying appropriate effort to identifying new technologies developed commercially by

the private sector and applying those technologies to national security and warfighter purposes?

Answer. While we can always do better, I believe DOD continues to reduce the obstacles associated with bringing commercially developed technologies to bear in support of the warfighter. The Department is focused on identifying new technologies developed commercially and applying those technologies to national security and warfighter purposes. For example, the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), a component of OUSD (R&E), has made significant strides in bridging the gap between the commercial technology sector and the military.

The DOD Research and Engineering Enterprise also seeks out promising technologies/capabilities through outreach via public engagement, presentations to industry and academic forums, engagement with technical professional groups, and open solicitations to non-traditional vendors. If confirmed, I will support these and other efforts to leverage commercial technology developed by the private sector to bring advantage to the warfighter.

Question. The Defense Science Board has recommended that DOD adopt a goal of dedicating 3% of the total defense budget to Science and Technology (S&T).

If confirmed, would you implement the DSB's recommendation?

Answer. The S&T budget provides critically important funding for long-term technology needs, and if confirmed, I will direct the USD(R&E) to develop a strategy for funding the S&T priorities to ensure that we can maintain and enhance our operational capabilities and work with Service Secretaries to support funding for the priorities.

Question. If confirmed, by what metric would you assess whether DOD is investing adequately in S&T programs and whether the DOD enterprise has achieved the proper balance between near-term research and long-term S&T?

Answer. S&T is a critical component of the Department's long term strategy to address the objectives of the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that DOD invests adequately in S&T to meet our mid and long term strategic needs and properly balances near-term R&D and longer-term S&T.

Question. In its 2018 report, *Foreign Economic Espionage in Cyberspace*, the National Counterintelligence and Security Center warned that "foreign economic and industrial espionage against the United States . . . represent a significant threat to America's prosperity, security, and competitive advantage." The report confirmed that China and Russia are engaged in campaigns to steal trade secrets, proprietary information, and other forms of intellectual property from the United States, through infiltration of the software supply chain, acquisition of knowledge by foreign students at United States universities, and other nefarious means—all as part of a strategic technology acquisition program.

What steps would you take, if confirmed, to strengthen National Security Industrial Base and National Security Innovation Base systems and processes to ensure that critical information is protected?

Answer. The National Defense Strategy and the Department of Defense Cyber Strategy highlight the importance of harnessing and protecting the National Security Innovation Base in order to compete, deter, and win in an increasingly complex global security environment. The Department can and should work closely with industry to protect sensitive information, platforms, and infrastructure through mechanisms such as cybersecurity assessments, supply chain illumination, and cost-effective, secure architectures and cybersecurity services. It will take a whole-of-government effort to ensure that critical information is protected and ensuring that every relevant agency in the government is working together to address this problem is a priority for the President-elect. If confirmed, I will make this area a priority.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

Question. Many DOD officials, including previous Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have advocated for accession to the Law of the Sea Convention.

Do you support United States accession to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea?

Answer. I support the navigation and overflight provisions contained in the Law of the Sea Convention. The global mobility of U.S. Forces relies on these rights and freedoms. I understand the United States has recognized that these provisions of the Law of the Sea Convention reflect customary international law that is applicable to all nations, whether or not a nation has ratified the Convention. The United States consistently respects the law of the sea and exercises these rights around the globe by flying, sailing, and operating wherever international law allows. If confirmed, I will support policies and actions that continue to exercise and safeguard these interests, as well as the free and open order of which the law of the sea is

a part. I will keep these objectives in mind when providing recommendations to the President and the Congress.

Question. In your view, what impact, if any, would United States accession to the Law of the Sea Convention have on emerging maritime disputes, such as in the South China Sea and in the Arctic?

Answer. Regardless of accession to the Law of the Sea Convention, the United States will continue to advocate for the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes without force or coercion. The United States does not generally insert itself into territorial or maritime disputes to which it is not a part. But the United States maintains a strong position on adherence to the legal regime of the oceans reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention. This principled stance drives the United States' commitment to not only a free and open Indo-Pacific region, but also to a free and open Arctic domain. If confirmed, I will work with other Federal departments and agencies and our allies and partners to support the free and open international order and continued access for all lawful uses of the oceans.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Question. Despite significant efforts by the Military Services to enhance their response to sexual assaults, including measures to care for victims and hold assailants accountable, the prevalence of sexual assault and unwanted sexual conduct, primarily for female servicemembers aged 17 to 24, remains too high.

Do you believe the policies, programs, and resources that DOD and the Military Services have put in place to prevent and respond to sexual assault, and to protect servicemembers who report sexual assault from retaliation, are working? If not, what else must be done?

Answer. My understanding is that over the last ten years, the Department has made progress in many areas, but there is much more to do. Although the current policies and programs are sound, execution of our approach must be more proactive and oversight of these efforts must be more timely and responsive. But as with all policies and programs, if confirmed, I would continue to closely monitor our progress and identify opportunities to improve and better support our servicemembers. The challenges posed by sexual assault constantly evolve; as such, our efforts must also continue to adapt. If confirmed, I will continue to refine and improve our approach so that every member can serve in a climate of dignity, respect, and inclusion.

Question. In your view, why hasn't the Department been more successful in preventing sexual assaults?

Answer. My understanding is that while the Department was able to see progress in this space between 2006 and 2016, the most recent data shows an uptick in reports of sexual assault. I also understand that this uptick was predominantly within our youngest enlisted cadre. This tells me we must do more to train, educate, and hold accountable enlisted leaders—our greatest influencers at that level—while maintaining a vigilant eye at the highest levels of leadership as well. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to take this on and ensure we not only have a force that embodies our expectations for good order and discipline, but that we hold our leaders, at all levels, appropriately accountable for these expectations.

Question. What is your assessment of the potential impact, if any, of proposals to remove disposition authority from military commanders over felony-level violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including sexual assault?

Answer. While I am very familiar with the current role of military commanders in the disposition of allegations of Uniform Code of Military Justice violations, I have not studied the potential impact of removal of that authority in depth. During the campaign, President-elect Biden stated his intention to "appoint a commission of current and former military leaders, sexual assault survivors and their advocates, and sexual assault experts, and give them 90 days to make concrete recommendations to me, including on prosecution decisions." If confirmed, I would closely study any such recommendations and confer with the President on the best way forward.

Question. Why are the number of prosecutions for sexual assault and retaliation in all Military Services so low? Why are conviction rates so low?

Answer. I understand that the Defense Advisory Committee on Investigations, Prosecutions and Defense of Sexual Assault in the Armed Forces—a statutorily mandated federal advisory committee—has studied the issue of preferral of charges alleging sexual assault offenses and provided preliminary findings in its October 2020 Report on Investigative Case File Reviews for Military Adult Penetrative Sexual Offense Cases Closed in fiscal year 2017. If confirmed, I will closely study the committee's findings and recommendations.

I have not studied conviction rates in the military justice system, but I understand that the Defense Advisory Committee on Investigations, Prosecutions, and De-

fense of Sexual Assault in the Armed Forces is studying the conviction rate in sexual assault cases and plans to further examine that issue. If confirmed, I will closely study any resulting findings and recommendations.

Question. If confirmed, what initiatives will you implement that focus on the prevention of sexual assaults in the military?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to support comprehensive prevention approaches that are part of a holistic plan to address sexual assault and other problems that may give rise to the crime, such as sexual harassment, hazing, and bullying. The Department's policies must demonstrate an integrated prevention approach that helps all leaders address command climate issues across the spectrum of problematic behaviors. If confirmed, I will demand that all leaders and servicemembers take ownership of their respective roles and execute them to the fullest of their abilities. President-elect Biden has also stated his intention to "appoint a commission of current and former military leaders, sexual assault survivors and their advocates, and sexual assault experts, and give them 90 days to make concrete recommendations to me," including on prevention initiatives. If confirmed, I would closely study any such recommendations for expanding the Department's prevention initiatives.

Question. If confirmed, what specific role and tasks would you establish for yourself in DOD's program of preventing and responding to both sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Answer. If confirmed, I will strongly support the Department's proactive approach to prevent and address sexual harassment and assault, including focusing on helping our young enlisted servicemembers. We must continue to equip our current and future leaders with the skills and competencies necessary to foster and maintain respectful climates. I will ensure that the Department continues to innovate and adapt its approaches. I also intend to lead by example and regularly engage with staff and the Military Departments and Services so everyone understands that mission readiness relies on taking care of our most valuable asset: Our people.

Question. Given your extensive experience as a military officer, do you perceive that if confirmed as Secretary of Defense, you would require additional authority from Congress to improve the Department's programs to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assaults?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review existing authorities and work with the Administration and with Congress if I determine additional authorities are necessary.

ACTIVE AND RESERVE COMPONENT END STRENGTH

Question. Since 2016, the Active Force has grown by about 50,000 servicemembers.

Do you believe military end strength should continue to grow? If yes, where do you believe that growth should occur?

Answer. Our servicemembers are our greatest asset. However, our people can only be effective if we pair them with the right equipment, training, and support. If confirmed, I will assess the Department's military manpower with the goal of ensuring it is properly sized to create an effective fighting force in line with the strategy.

As previously stated, if confirmed, I will look to ensure any end strength growth or reduction is paired with associated requirements with equipment, training, and support. If confirmed, I will focus any end strength changes on the highest priority national security challenges.

Question. What aggregate active end strength do you believe is necessary to meet the demands placed on the Military Services by the 2018 NDS and associated operational plans?

Answer. Each servicemember plays a crucial role in enabling the Department to defend the nation in line with our strategy. If confirmed, I will seek to find the right balance between the size of the force and our ability to keep it ready and modernized to provide the best protection to our nation.

Question. If active end strength continues to increase, what specific parameters would you use to determine what the corresponding Reserve Component end strength should be?

Answer. The mix of Active and Reserve Forces should be assessed by each service and by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and as part of the program and budget review process used to build the annual defense budget request. The best mix would maximize lethality and readiness and ensure that the range of the Department's missions are covered by those forces best suited to them, while minimizing cost.

Question. In your view, do the Reserve components serve as an operational Reserve, a strategic Reserve, or both? In light of your answer, do the Reserve Compo-

nents require increased levels of full-time support, improved equipment, increased training, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?

Answer. For the last twenty years, the Reserve Components have successfully provided both ready operational capabilities and on-call strategic depth to provide the full spectrum of lethality in support of the National Defense Strategy (NDS) requirements.

The Reserve Components' resourcing levels in manning, equipping, training, and readiness must be tailored to meet National Defense Strategy (NDS) requirements in competition, crisis, and armed conflict. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Reserve Components are appropriately resourced to execute NDS requirements.

RECRUITING AND RETENTION

Question. The National Defense Strategy Commission asserted unequivocally that the most critical resource required to produce a highly capable military is highly capable people, in the quantity required, and willing to serve. Yet, DOD studies indicate that only about 29% of today's youth population is eligible for military service. Further, only a fraction of those who meet military accession standards are interested in serving.

Do you agree with the premise that the shortage in the number of American youth eligible, qualified for, and interested in serving in the Armed Forces poses an existential threat to national security?

Answer. Yes, I agree that the limited population who are eligible to serve and a low propensity to serve are concerning, as this challenge impacts our ability to meet our national security objectives. If confirmed, I will work with the Congress and the Military Departments and Services on initiatives to increase interest and eligibility for military service among young Americans to sustain the All-Volunteer Force.

Question. In your opinion, why are so few individuals in the 17 to 24 age range eligible for service, and what can be done to increase the pool of individuals qualified for, and interested in military service?

Answer. Medical reasons disqualify most of the youth in this age group, a third of which are disqualified for being overweight. If confirmed, I will work with the Congress and the Military Departments and Services on developing ideas and initiatives to increase the number of young Americans qualified for military service in order to sustain the All-Volunteer Force.

Question. What programs, policies, or tools does the Department need to increase the propensity to serve of today's youth?

Answer. To improve propensity, we must change misperceptions of what it means to serve in the military. Today, fewer Americans have a personal connection to the military than at any time in the past several decades, and the gap between the American people and their military continues to grow wider. If confirmed, I will support initiatives that bridge knowledge gaps, correct misperceptions and reinforce a consistent, positive message in the market that raises the esteem of joining the military.

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

Answer. I believe it equally important to maintain high recruitment and retention standards and to meet authorized end strength levels. Despite ongoing recruiting challenges, the Services have been successful in recruiting both the quality and quantity of recruits needed to sustain the All-Volunteer Force. If confirmed, I will continue to support efforts and policies that enable the Services to meet their recruiting goals.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take to increase diversity and improve inclusion in the military?

Answer. The Department has long identified diversity as a strategic imperative to maintaining a strong, viable military force. As I understand it, the Military Departments and Services are exploring new initiatives to expand and bolster the strategic tools needed to reach a wide and representative number of youth. Initiatives include reviewing promotion and command screening procedures and issuing policies that ensure pregnancy does not impede a servicemember's career. If confirmed, I remain committed to building on and expanding these efforts. We must find a way to engage with American youth in all communities and to help them understand the many benefits of military service, which they could not attain in the private sector.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE ARMED FORCES

Question. One consequence of the relatively low proportion of American youth who are eligible and interested in military service is that the military services have in-

creasingly recruited from the same sources, schools, and geographic locations, and have targeted recruits from military families. Over time, these practices can decrease diversity in the Armed Forces, including diversity of background, experience, and thought that benefit any organization.

Do you believe broadening recruitment efforts and promotion practices within the Armed Forces, with a goal of ensuring the Armed Forces reflect the diverse population of the United States eligible to serve, is a matter of national security, and should be a national priority?

Answer. Yes, I believe that recruiting a force reflective of the Nation serves as a critical component of our national security strategy. I recognize the Department gains a strategic advantage by leveraging the diversity of all members. If confirmed, I will support the Armed Forces with ongoing efforts to recruit a Force that reflects the rich diversity of the Nation they serve, and an equitable approach to promotion practices.

Question. If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to support increased diversity and inclusion within the Armed Forces?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize and strengthen the Department's commitment to diversity and inclusion—and equal opportunity—all of which enhance our military readiness. Our force is stronger when we leverage the strengths of all members. I will reaffirm that military and civilian leaders at all levels are responsible to promote and instill these ideals. And I would champion accountability as the DOD continues with efforts on improving diversity, equity and inclusion within the Department. Additionally, if confirmed, I would support the Department's ongoing efforts to implement the recommendations recently offered by DOD Board on Diversity and Inclusion and ensure that the Department appropriately prioritizes and resources these implementation initiatives. Moving forward, if confirmed, I will seek the independent advice of the Defense Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion to inform efforts underway and to provide additional insights.

Question. If confirmed, how would you expand recruiting efforts to reach every corner of America, including expanding recruiting efforts and outreach to historically hard-to-recruit locations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to support Military Department and Service initiatives to apply a broad array of strategic tools and approaches to increase the diversity within their ranks. Furthermore, I will continue to foster key partnerships with community leaders and other influencers to generate interest in the military as an employer of choice for today's youth.

Question. There is a long history of honorable and courageous immigrant service in the Armed Forces, in all conflicts.

Do you believe that military entrance requirements and testing practices accurately measure the military potential of non-native English speakers?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the current efforts across the Department to ensure valid, reliable, and fair criteria and measures are used to access applicants with highest potential, to include non-native English Speakers.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that entrance requirements ensure the Armed Forces are not inadvertently missing out on talented youth who may be disadvantaged because they are not native English speakers?

Answer. The Department's overarching goal is to access applicants with highest potential to perform in the field, while ensuring diversity and inclusion. It is my understanding that the Department is in the process of conducting an overarching review of best practices used by the academia to assess academic achievement for non-native English speakers. If confirmed, I will review these results and those of similar efforts, and direct actions that achieve a wider reach to all populations while maintaining appropriate enlistment standards.

ASSIGNMENT POLICIES FOR WOMEN IN THE SERVICE

Question. Since 2015, all military occupations and units have been open to the assignment of any servicemember who can meet the occupational standards, including women.

What challenges still exist with regard to the assignment of women? What proactive measures would you take or direct to address those challenges, if confirmed?

Answer. The Department has lifted all assignment restrictions regarding the assignment of women. We must continue oversight of the integration of women into formerly closed units. We should redouble our efforts to attract and retain women in the military. Women are less compelled to join and pursue careers in operational specialties. We must assure prospective recruits that they can have extremely suc-

cessful and rewarding careers in a full range of specialties. Otherwise, we are missing out on critical talent that is vital to sustaining the All-volunteer force.

If confirmed, I will ensure DOD is known as an employer of choice for women and all underrepresented populations. We have become disconnected from the majority of Americans. They do not understand who we are and misunderstand what life in the military entails. This lack of familiarity often results in military service not being considered when American youth make their career choices.

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Question. On September 1, 2020, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness released DOD Instruction (DODI) 1300.17, in accordance with Section 533(a)(1) of NDAA for fiscal year 2013, as amended, and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. DODI 1300.17 establishes policy, assigns responsibilities, and provides procedures for the accommodation of servicemembers' religious practices.

Do you believe that DODI 1300.17 appropriately protects servicemembers' right to observe the tenants of their religion, or to observe no religion at all?

Answer. Although I have not yet had an opportunity to review how DODI 1300.17 has been implemented, my understanding is that all applicable statutory provisions, including recent amendments, are included in the latest revision to the DODI, thereby ensuring the rights of our servicemembers are protected.

Question. Do each of the Military Service's policies and processes appropriately accommodate the religious practices of individual servicemembers, in your view?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be attentive to the necessity to ensure the appropriate accommodation of servicemembers' religious beliefs. The demands of service require individuals who are strong physically, as well as spiritually.

Question. Do you support a policy that allows a prospective recruit to request and receive an accommodation of religious practices prior to enlisting or accepting a commission in a Military Service?

Answer. Yes. To do otherwise would require an individual to potentially violate their faith by signing documents committing to follow all uniform regulations without knowing if an accommodation such as maintaining a beard will be granted.

Question. Do you support a policy that allows a servicemember's religious accommodation, once granted, to follow the member throughout his/her military career—no matter where he/she is stationed or the nature of his/her specific duties—unless it can be demonstrated that the accommodation adversely affects military mission accomplishment?

Answer. We should not make individuals choose between faith and service to our great Nation. Having their accommodation follow them unless that accommodation adversely affects mission accomplishment is a means to not placing the servicemember in such an untenable position.

Question. In your view, do existing DOD policies and practices regarding public prayers offered by a military chaplain in both official and unofficial settings strike the proper balance between a chaplain's right to pray in accordance with the tenets of his/her religious faith and the rights of other servicemembers who may hold with different beliefs, including no religious beliefs, who may be present in these settings?

Answer. In my experience, yes. If confirmed, I will direct a review of our policies to ensure chaplains have the right to pray in accordance with the tenets of their faith.

MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE AND FAMILY READINESS

Question. The Senate Armed Services Committee views military quality of life and military family readiness as critical factors in the recruitment and retention of servicemembers. Military families want access to high quality education for their children, and to high quality health care and child care services on military installations and in local communities. Military spouses seek education and employment opportunities, and military families benefit from modern morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) services.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will support quality of life programs that reinforce a strong military community and focus on those that will help to build and sustain resilient families. My priorities include spouse employment, preventing both domestic violence and serious harm to children, and child care programs. I will base my decisions on programs that are determined to have the greatest impact on readiness, retention, and resiliency.

Question. Do you believe that the Department should include military family readiness considerations, such as the quality of public education, and the availability of healthcare and childcare, in its evaluation of basing options in the United States?

Answer. Yes. These considerations, and others such as housing, and licensure portability for military spouses and other beneficial State-level legislation and policies, are important as they contribute to the overall readiness and well-being of the military family.

Question. If confirmed, how would you improve the “base scoring” process to ensure that local communities are capable of providing quality services to support military families?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Department Secretaries to continue their efforts to develop criteria that will equitably evaluate State and local community actions to support the needs of military families.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that Reserve component families receive necessary support services while their servicemembers are mobilized and deployed? How would you ensure that Active component families who do not reside near a military installation receive support services?

Answer. The Department’s approach must focus on both Active Duty and Reserve component members and families. It is imperative that the Department continue to provide support for a geographically-dispersed population through a coordinated network of care encompassing support and services provided by the Department and other Federal, State, local, non-profit and private entities. One example of a DOD-wide resource for families is Military OneSource—the Department’s 24/7/365 solution to providing servicemembers and their families with resources, tools, and information.

If confirmed, I will explore what needs currently exist, and determine what is available to families wherever they reside in order to identify gaps. Innovative solutions, such as web-based delivery systems, may allow the Department to be more flexible and responsive to the diverse needs of the population. Military OneSource, for example, is a virtually accessible program offering support services from anywhere around the world. The Department should continue to work with other federal agencies, and those in local governments, businesses, and non-profit stakeholders, to ensure support for military families wherever they live and work.

Question. The Committee often hears that Active component military families have difficulty obtaining child care on the military installation and that there are thousands of families on waitlists to receive infant care.

What are your innovative ideas for increasing the availability of accessible, high-quality childcare, at an appropriate cost, for military families?

Answer. Child care is a critical issue for military families, especially in the current environment. If confirmed, I will review the current efforts of the Department in this vital area and work with the Military Departments and Services and the Congress to develop a multi-pronged strategy that addresses identified shortfalls. My understanding is that the Department is hard at work evaluating the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA child care legislation including but not limited to: standardization of child care fee assistance, 24-hour child care, and assessment of staff pay and benefits to increase capacity.

Question. If confirmed, would you support the consolidation of commissaries and the Service Exchanges into a single defense resale system?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the Department’s original recommendations on this issue and will evaluate the savings and efficiencies that can be gained by various service models or consolidations. It is important that any consolidation or shared services model maintains or improves the benefit while achieving desired savings.

NON-DEPLOYABLE SERVICEMEMBERS

Question. The Department has published DODI 1332.45, *Retention Determinations for Non-Deployable Servicemembers*.

Do you agree that servicemembers who are non-deployable for more than 12 consecutive months should be subject either to separation from service or referral into the Disability Evaluation System?

Answer. As I understand the current policy, individuals who are non-deployable for more than 12 months are evaluated to determine if they are able to perform their duties and, if not, evaluated, to determine whether or not continued Service is appropriate. As every servicemember contributes to the readiness of the force, I believe such an individualized review is necessary. If confirmed, I will direct a review of the existing policy to better understand how it has been implemented.

Question. DODI 1332.45 provides that the Secretaries of the Military Departments may “retain . . . those servicemembers whose period of non-deployability exceeds the 12 consecutive month limit . . . if determined to be in the best interest of the Military Service.”

Under what circumstances would the retention of a servicemember who has been non-deployable for more than 12 months be “in the best interest of the Military Service”?

Answer. Each case must be evaluated on its own set of facts. What is in the best interest of the Service will vary greatly depending on the skills of the individual when measured against the needs of the Military Service. Individuals with unique skills that are in short supply would be an example of when a Service may determine that the individual’s continued Service warrants retention.

Question. In your view, how should this policy be applied to servicemembers with HIV? To servicemembers who identify as transgender?

Answer. My understanding is that medical science is advancing in the treatment and prevention of HIV. The Department of Defense should routinely review our policies if medical advances occur for all medical conditions. If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing our policies as it relates to HIV.

To be credible to our servicemembers, the Department’s policies must apply fairly and equally to all. An individual’s gender identity should not be a factor in such a determination.

MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM REFORM

Question. In your view, do military medical providers have the critical wartime medical competencies and experience required to provide competent combat casualty care?

Answer. Emphasizing the importance of continuously exercising and improving the knowledge, skills and abilities of our medical force must be a high priority for the Department, and if confirmed, I will seek to ensure that medical providers have the necessary medical competencies and experience.

Question. Section 702 of the NDAA for fiscal year 2017, as modified by sections 711 and 712 of the NDAA for fiscal year 2019, transferred the administration and management of military hospitals and clinics from the Military Departments to the Defense Health Agency (DHA), a Combat Support Agency.

Do you agree with the congressional mandates for military health system (MHS) reform? Please explain your answer.

Answer. The Military Health System should be focused on its core readiness mission and providing quality health care to all beneficiaries in accordance with guidance provided by Congress. Consolidating the administration and management of the military hospitals and clinics, along with public health and research activities, under the Defense Health Agency (DHA) as directed by Congress has the potential to continue improving overall readiness, effectiveness and efficiency. If confirmed, I will look forward to working with Congress to ensure effective implementation of Military Health System reforms.

Question. If confirmed, specifically how would you ensure the rapid and efficient transfer of the control, administration, and management of all military treatment facilities to the DHA?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit early in my tenure to being briefed on the status of the transition and continue to follow the transition progress to make sure the transfer is completed to best support the future needs of the National Defense Strategy and the nation and in full compliance with all legal requirements.

Question. If confirmed, specifically how would you bring to an end actions by the Military Services to delay or reverse MHS reform?

Answer. If confirmed, I will listen intently to the Military Services concerns and work to address any issues they raise if possible. I will work to facilitate unity of effort across the Military Services, ensure transparency and cooperation among all stakeholders, and will make clear decisions to move forward within the timelines set forth in law to accomplish the Congress’ intent.

Question. Do you see value in restructuring the DHA as a new combatant command—a Unified Medical Command—in the future? In your view, what would be the pros and cons of such a command?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to fully implement the ongoing reforms Congress has directed. These ongoing reforms represent major transformations for the military health system and should serve to increase operational readiness and improve quality and efficiency in healthcare delivery. After a reasonable period following completion of the statutory reforms, I will assess the net effect and determine if

there is a need for further consolidation or potential value to moving to a Unified Medical Command model.

With regard to pros and cons, if confirmed, I would want to consult with Congress after I have had time to more fully examine the issue and assess the impact of the current round of reforms.

If confirmed, I will work to fully implement the ongoing reforms Congress has directed. After a reasonable period following completion of the statutory reforms, I will assess the net effect and determine if there is a need for further consolidation or potential value to moving to a Unified Medical Command model. With regard to pros and cons, if confirmed I would want to come back to you after I have had time to more fully examine the issue and to fully assess the impact of the current round of reforms.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Question. The number of suicides in each of the Military Services continues to concern the Committee.

If confirmed, what new initiatives would you implement to prevent suicides by military personnel and their family members?

Answer. Suicide is a national public health tragedy that affects people of all ages, from all walks of life. Every suicide is devastating, and forever changes the lives of families and communities. I am deeply committed to supporting and protecting those who defend our country, and it is imperative that we do everything possible to reduce the risk of suicide and prevent suicidal behaviors. If confirmed, I will ensure new suicide prevention initiatives continue to be evidence-based and support efforts target prevention strategies for our populations of greatest concern, particularly our youngest military members. If confirmed, I will continue to collaborate with leaders across the Military Departments and Services, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and those in academia and the non-government sector to evolve our strategies—and identify new, evidence-informed methods to prevent the national tragedy of suicide.

Question. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to stem higher incidences of suicide at remote installations (like Fort Wainwright, Alaska) and on ships underway?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department's public health approach to suicide prevention focused on our populations of greatest concern. We must continue to emphasize comprehensive efforts to help individuals before they may become at risk of harming themselves and ensure we provide all necessary medical care and treatment; this includes support initiatives that enhance connectedness to family, friends, and fellow servicemembers, and promote help-seeking behavior, particularly for those serving in remote environments. Additionally, I will ensure that DOD continues to investigate and learn why there may be higher concentrations of suicides in a particular area. In accordance with the recently passed National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, I will issue guidance requiring each suicide involving a servicemember to be reviewed by a multidisciplinary board to ensure no stone is left unturned.

Question. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to enhance the reporting and tracking of suicide among family members and dependents of servicemembers across both Active and Reserve Components?

Answer. If confirmed, I will assess the current processes and identify opportunities to enhance both the accuracy and timeliness of collecting, tracking, and reporting suicides among our military community. I am deeply committed to supporting and protecting those who defend our country and their families, who also sacrifice for our Nation.

THE DOD CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

Question. DOD is the Federal Government's largest employer of civilian personnel. The vast majority of DOD civilian personnel policies comport with requirements set forth in title 5 of the U.S. Code, and corresponding regulations under the purview of the Office of Personnel Management. Although this Committee does not have jurisdiction over title 5, over the years, it has provided numerous extraordinary hiring and management authorities tailored to specific segments of the DOD civilian workforce.

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

Answer. In my view, one of the biggest challenges the Department faces is the competition for cutting-edge technical talent. This talent is essential to implement the defense strategy and is in high-demand in the private sector. DOD must be in-

novative in our talent, recruitment, and retention efforts in order to achieve the DOD mission. DOD must be an employer of choice for such high-demand professionals. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress in continuing to create the necessary efficiencies and flexibilities to recruit, retain, and compensate these in-demand professionals.

Question. Do you advocate the creation of a new “title 10” DOD civilian workforce and a concomitant body of title 10 personnel authorities applicable only to the DOD civilian workforce? If so, how should these new authorities improve on title 5, in your view?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to determine if creation of a new title 10 system for the DOD civilian workforce would be more effective in meeting the Department’s needs.

It is my understanding that the current title 5 civilian personnel system may not be fully sufficient to outpace our competitors where needed to attract, hire, and retain a civilian workforce necessary to support of DOD’s national security mission.

Question. Under current law, the civilian pay raise to adjust for wage inflation is set at the Employment Cost Index (ECI) minus 0.5 percent, or at about a 2.5 percent for fiscal year 2021. Yet, the Department’s budget frequently does not provide funding for a civilian pay increase.

If confirmed, would you support a pay raise for DOD civilian employees, consistent with current law?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I would support pay raises for civilian employees. Civilian pay must remain as competitive as possible to attract and retain a qualified workforce in support of the DOD mission.

Question. Do you agree that the DOD civilian workforce is part of the total force and serves as a force multiplier for the uniformed military force?

Answer. Yes. The effective and appropriate use of the DOD civilian workforce allows the Department to focus its servicemembers on the tasks and functions that are truly military essential, thereby enhancing the readiness of our warfighters.

Question. How do you assess the diversity of the DOD civilian workforce? If confirmed, how would you ensure that diversity and inclusion within the civilian workforce is sufficiently prioritized?

Answer. If I am confirmed, diversity and inclusion across the entire Department will be one of my highest priorities. Ensuring the civilian workforce reflects our nation is critical to DOD’s success. If confirmed, I will continue to leverage the Department’s established surveys and equal employment opportunity (EEO) data assessments to gauge civilian employee experiences and identify trends involving equal opportunity and diversity and inclusion. In addition, as the Department implements the recommendations recently offered by the DOD Board on Diversity and Inclusion, I will, if confirmed, seek internal and external inputs and perspectives to strengthen our equal opportunity and diversity and inclusion programs Department-wide.

DOD civilian employees are vital to our nation’s defense and integral members of the Total Force. If I am confirmed, as part of DOD’s efforts, I will instruct leaders at all levels to prioritize diversity and inclusion initiatives across the civilian workforce and identify trends and areas for improvement. Further, I would ensure the Department appropriately assesses the effectiveness of existing and newly proposed initiatives, and tailor DOD’s diversity and inclusion policies, programs, and processes to ensure we appropriately leverage diversity and inclusion initiatives throughout the civilian workforce.

GENERAL/FLAG OFFICERS

Question. The fiscal year 2016 and 2017 NDAs required DOD to reduce by about 12 percent the number of General/Flag Officer (G/FO) positions by the end of 2022. As of December 2020, the Department has achieved only about one-third of the required G/FO reductions, mostly by cutting vacant positions. DOD currently plans to identify and implement all remaining non-Joint reductions in 2022.

Do you believe that the Department’s decision to delay the identification and elimination of the remaining G/FO positions is prudent? Please explain your answer.

Answer. I have not yet had an opportunity to assess the Department’s decision to delay the identification and elimination of the remaining G/FO positions. If confirmed, I am committed to ensure the Department meets the statutorily-required reductions, as mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017.

Question. If confirmed, what factors would you consider in determining whether a G/FO position should be continued in the current grade, downgraded, or eliminated?

Answer. If confirmed, I would prioritize existing and emerging senior officer requirements based on the position's scope of responsibilities and prospective contributions to accomplishing the National Defense Strategy to ensure the Department meets all statutory limitations.

Question. If confirmed, and as the U.S. Space Force continues to grow, how would you propose to transfer the requisite number of general officer allocations to the Space Force while also meeting the reduction mandate?

Answer. If I am confirmed, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I would seek to optimize the senior officer corps to best accomplish the missions assigned to the Department of Defense. At this time, I do not know enough about the U.S. Space Force requirements to provide an informed response. However, I commit to providing Congress with a response at a later date once I have had an opportunity to review the issue.

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Question. Last year's report of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service made a number of recommendations to increase and facilitate service opportunities in military, national, and public service. These recommendations included modernizing the Military Selective Service Act (MSSA) to include the registration of women, and strengthening the relationship between military and national/public service recruitment and programmatic efforts.

Do you support amending the MSSA to include the registration of women? Do you support the Commission's other recommendations intended to modernize the MSSA? Please explain your answer.

Answer. I understand that Congress created the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service to study and provide a recommendation on this question as a core task. If confirmed, I would review the Commission's recommendations and seek the input of experts within the Department before making an assessment. I am aware that future wars may have requirements for skills in non-combat fields in which the percentage of individuals qualified would not be variable by gender and excluding approximately 50% of the population—the female half—from availability for the draft in the case of a national emergency. Having a national conversation on the responsibilities of citizenship for all Americans would play an important role in increasing consideration of military service by both women and men, which is critical to the sustainment of the All-Volunteer Force.

If it is determined that the MSSA is an important component of our National Defense Strategy, then it is logical to modernize the system. If confirmed, I would work across the government to aid this effort.

Question. Do you agree with the Commission's conclusion that the Selective Service System is still needed today, but must be updated to reflect how we fight and breadth of skills needed in today's Armed Forces?

Answer. Yes, the Selective Service System is useful as it provides a hedge against the catastrophe we do not yet anticipate. The Selective Service System is a means to remind our youth that public service is a valued part of American citizenship. Making the data more useful to the Department through modern data mining techniques would be a way to improve the system's effectiveness. Capturing civilian experiences in a structured way would also aid in managing the talent the Department seeks to recruit.

Question. What other changes to the MSSA and the Selective Service System do you believe would be useful and why?

Answer. If confirmed, I will thoroughly review the Commission's report, consult with experts and seek opportunities to identify other changes I believe would enhance the value of the SSS to the Department's mission.

Question. Do you agree that expanding military, national, and public service opportunities, and encouraging greater service by America's youth generally, not just in the military but in national and public service, can, over time, increase propensity to serve among youth, and increase the likelihood that influencers recommend military service to the young men and women seeking their guidance?

Answer. Military, national, and public service are an important component of citizenship. Expanding both the knowledge of and access to these opportunities would have an overall positive impact on all forms of service to our country.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT AND THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Question. Since September 11, 2001, collaboration—both analytical and operational—between the Defense Department and the Intelligence Community has grown increasingly close. On one hand, seamless collaboration is vital to effective and rapid responses to non-traditional threats, and bringing together the strengths

of the full spectrum of defense and intelligence capabilities can generate more effective solutions to complex problems. On the other hand, without effective management and oversight, such collaboration risks blurring distinct agency missions, authorities, and funding, as well as creating redundant lines of effort.

In your view, are there aspects of the current relationship between the Department and the Intelligence Community that should be re-examined or modified?

Answer. Yes, we should always be open to examine our procedures and processes. Close collaboration between the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Intelligence Community (IC) is vital to national security. I believe it is particularly important for DOD and IC collaboration to focus on improved integration of intelligence priorities, equitable resource management, and enhanced information sharing to include refined policies, where necessary, and common data standards. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Director of National Intelligence to achieve unity of effort and the best effect in employing DOD intelligence elements within the law in support of the National Security Strategy.

EXECUTE ORDERS (EXORDS)

Question. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 requires the Secretary of Defense, upon request by the Chairman or Ranking Member, to provide the Armed Services Committees with the ability to access and review EXORDS signed by the Secretary or the commander of a combatant command.

If confirmed, would you comply with this requirement?

Answer. Yes, consistent with legal exceptions.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

Question. In order to exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive timely testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with

this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE

AFGHANISTAN

1. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, in your advance policy question (APQ) responses regarding United States national security objectives in Afghanistan you wrote that “President-elect Biden has pledged to bring the war in Afghanistan to a responsible end.” How would you define “responsible end”?

Mr. AUSTIN. A responsible end to the war in Afghanistan will focus on ensuring that terrorist groups like al Qaeda and the Islamic State Khorasan Province are not allowed to threaten the United States, our allies, or our interests. To that end, the Administration will continue supporting a political process between the Afghan Government and the Taliban with the aim of ending violence plaguing the country and allowing for an inclusive government that protects its diverse population and is a responsible member of the international community.

EROSION OF MILITARY ADVANTAGE

2. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, in your APQ responses you wrote, “The continued erosion of United States military advantage vis-à-vis China and Russia, in key strategic areas, remains the most significant risk the Department must address.” What are the key strategic areas of United States military advantage regarding Russia and China that you feel need to be addressed?

Mr. AUSTIN. Chinese and Russian military modernization, changes in doctrine, and increasingly aggressive activities across the continuum of conflict threaten to undermine the security of United States allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific and on NATO’s eastern frontier, regions previously regarded as relatively stable after the Cold War. More specifically, both competitors have endeavored to develop the means militarily to blunt the United States’ ability to project power into these regions in support of our allies in periods of potential crisis. China and Russia pose evolving challenges to our forward deterrent posture by modernizing their nuclear arsenals; advancing their capabilities and concepts for conducting information, space, and counter-space operations; and pursuing a range of malign cyber activities, in both day-to-day competition and in potential crises, including ones that could affect the United States Homeland.

DUAL-HATTING NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY AND UNITED STATES CYBER COMMAND

3. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, do you think, in the middle of a cyber-intrusion of the magnitude of SolarWinds, that it would be smart to separate the dual-hat arrangement of the National Security Agency (NSA) and U.S. Cyber Command (CYBERCOM) that has worked so effectively to date and that this committee has debated and strongly endorsed on numerous occasions?

Mr. AUSTIN. It is important that we take a long term view of what is best for the missions of both organizations. I believe that it is best to avoid making decisions on the basis of any one event and focus on the long term value to national security. The SolarWinds incident is deeply concerning, and the Government is just starting to understand the full implications. If confirmed, I plan to assess the state of our cybersecurity readiness and the roles of the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command.

MOVEMENT OF ISRAEL TO UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND PORTFOLIO

4. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, do you agree with the move of Israel from United States European Command (EUCOM) to United States Central Command (CENTCOM) and do you think there is a risk that the commander of CENTCOM will become a primary negotiator between the Arab nations and Israel?

Mr. AUSTIN. I agree with the move. DOD reviews the Unified Command Plan every two years and structures boundaries to best mitigate risk and protect U.S. interests and partners. Israel is a leading strategic partner for the United States, and this move will create additional opportunities for cooperation with United States Central Command while maintaining strong cooperation between Israel and our Eu-

ropean allies. This move better aligns our military approach to the region and our partners.

UNITED STATES MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

5. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, in your APQ responses you wrote, “I believe we can better calibrate United States military presence in the Middle East . . . ” What kind of calibration do you have in mind? What would you increase or decrease the military presence?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will carefully review the DOD presence in the Middle East to ensure balance among operational requirements, risk, readiness, and global commitments. With the evolution of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have an opportunity to reassess our current posture in the region and determine what capabilities are required to deter Iran and support regional stability. This reassessment will be critical to increasing the Department’s focus on China and rebuilding readiness.

UNITED STATES TROOP PRESENCE IN SYRIA

6. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, your APQ response to the question of “Do United States troops in Syria help “push back” on Russian and Iranian Influence in the Middle East?” indicated that the Defeat-ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] campaign was made more complex by other threats in the region, but did not address the impact of United States presence in Syria on Russian or Iranian influence. Do you think the United States presence in Syria has any impact on Russian or Iranian influence in the region and do you feel this is important in the larger context of long term strategic competition with Russia?

Mr. AUSTIN. My understanding is that the United States presence in Syria is focused first and foremost on ensuring the lasting defeat of ISIS. As the partner of choice in the region, our presence also enables us to have strong relationships with local partners who would otherwise be vulnerable to Russian or Iranian coercion. These relationships help us shape outcomes favorable to United States interests, often at the cost of increased Russian and Iranian influence. Russia, through its support to the Assad regime and basing agreements in Syria, intends to support an enduring footprint in the region to undermine strategic United States and NATO interests, as evidenced during the Syrian civil war, by its increased naval presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. More recently, we see a similar approach its intervention in Libya.

SECTION 127E ACTIVITIES

7. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, in your APQ response to the question on section 127e and section 1202 activities, you did not address section 127e activities. Do you have reservations about the use or implementation of section 127e authority to support foreign forces or irregular forces supporting or facilitating authorized U.S. special forces operations to combat terrorism?

Mr. AUSTIN. The authority under Section 127e provides excellent strategic value for the money spent on the programs. The ability to support foreign irregular forces, groups, and individuals under this fiscal authority gives U.S. special operations forces an effective, low-cost option to combat terrorism in close coordination with foreign partners, while maintaining a minimal U.S. footprint. Geographic combatant commanders continue to express strong support for this authority as a critical component of their counterterrorism efforts. If confirmed, I would advocate for continued attention to and support for this authority, ensuring that operations remain thoroughly coordinated with relevant Chiefs of Mission and that DOD remains fully transparent with Congress in executing the authority.

DEFENSE BUDGET TOPLINE

8. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments and the Ronald Reagan Institute hosted two bipartisan exercises by recognized leaders in their fields of defense and budget and policy makers, and industry executives to assess consequences of potential cuts to the Department of Defense budget topline. “The results of this bipartisan group effort were clear: defense budget cuts would have devastating consequences of our military and our national security. A 10 percent cut would leave the United States with a military that is incapable of carrying out the current National Defense Strategy.” Do you agree that a 10 percent cut would eviscerate force structure and make it impossible to achieve the objectives of the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS)?

Mr. AUSTIN. Under any resourcing level, the Department must balance readiness, force structure, and modernization while pursuing efficiencies and savings through organizational reform and critical reviews of ongoing missions and activities. If confirmed, I will continue to push for the best possible balance amongst competing priorities regardless of the topline. While a budgetary reduction will pose a challenge, I will emphasize the need to maintain a ready, technologically advanced force to ensure the Nation's national security is preserved.

9. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, in an article in Foreign Affairs in the spring of 2020, Kathleen Hicks argued that through "reshaping overall strategy, pursuing politically difficult efficiency gains, and cultivating innovation . . . After some upfront investment, the Defense Department could expect to reduce its annual costs by some \$20 billion to \$30 billion." Do you agree, and if so, what is your estimate of the "up-front investment" required to achieve these savings?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I would consider all ideas to improve the Nation's national security posture. Savings may be achievable, but I would want to hear from Dr. Hicks and others to better understand the trades involved.

SENSITIVE CYBER OPERATIONS

10. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, 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. What would you do to improve these cyber operations notifications?

Mr. AUSTIN. In accordance with section 395 of Title 10, U.S. Code, the Department regularly notifies the congressional defense committees within 48 hours of completing a sensitive military cyber operation. I am committed to the principle of Congressional oversight of military operations. If confirmed, I will work with DOD components to provide the information through these notifications that enable Congressional oversight.

11. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, are there steps other than improving the written notifications of sensitive cyber operations that you would take to help Congress perform oversight of these critical operations?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will commit to assessing whether the timely, informative quarterly cyber operations briefings the Department provides, in accordance with section 484 of Title 10, U.S. Code, and the annual military cyberspace operations report, as required by Section 1644 of the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, are sufficient to ensure congress has the information it requires to oversee sensitive military cyber operations.

INTEGRATED AIR AND MISSILE DEFENSE

12. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, the Army is responsible for air and missile defense of forward bases in both Europe and the Indo-Pacific, and was required by the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to procure two batteries of an interim missile defense capability by September 30, 2020, and a second set of two batteries by September 30, 2023. The Army missed the first deadline and does not appear poised to meet the second deadline. Do you believe there needs to be a shift in the air and missile defense roles and responsibilities to ensure that bases the U.S. Armed Forces rely on to generate the combat power required for implementation of the NDS are adequately protected?

Mr. AUSTIN. Air and missile defense of forward bases is inherently a Joint responsibility and all the services contribute to this mission. If confirmed, I will review the Air and Missile Defense roles and responsibilities outlined in DOD Directive 5100.01 to determine if any adjustments are required in order to ensure effective mitigation of the risks presented by adversary air and missile, in the context of a new U.S. defense strategy.

NUCLEAR MODERNIZATION

13. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, I was somewhat reassured when you indicated your support for the U.S. nuclear triad during your confirmation hearing. However, it troubles me that while you agreed that nuclear deterrence is the Department of Defense's highest priority mission, and acknowledged that we have reached the point where the entire U.S. deterrent must be updated, you would not commit to supporting the programs needed to do so.

Mr. AUSTIN. As I stated at my confirmation hearing, I agree with my four confirmed predecessors going back to Secretary of Defense Hagel that nuclear deter-

rence is the highest priority mission of the Department of Defense. An effective U.S. nuclear deterrent remains vital to U.S. national security and to the security of our allies. If confirmed, I will request a comprehensive review of nuclear threats facing the United States and of the status of our nuclear modernization and sustainment programs, and will provide the committee my perspectives based upon this review.

14. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, Department of Defense officials estimate that the total annual cost of operating and modernizing the U.S. nuclear deterrent is currently about 3.5 percent of the defense budget, and will not exceed 7 percent even at the peak of planned investments. Indeed, during testimony before this committee in 2016, your former boss, then-Secretary Ashton Carter noted the following on nuclear costs, "It's not an enormous part of our budget, but it is a critical part of our budget." Do you believe that 7 percent of the defense budget is an excessive amount to spend on what the past five Secretaries of Defense and you yourself have called the DOD's highest priority defense mission?

Mr. AUSTIN. The nuclear deterrence mission is one of the Department's highest priority missions, and updating and overhauling our nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority. If confirmed, I plan to request an early briefing on the U.S. nuclear modernization program to ensure that it is being executed in the most cost effective and judicious manner.

NUCLEAR POLICY

15. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, in his final address as Vice President, President Biden argued against modernizing the U.S. nuclear deterrent, advocated for unilateral United States nuclear weapons reductions regardless of whether Russia would reciprocate, and supported unprecedented policy constraints on the United States's ability to deter strategic attacks against our country and our allies. Given that our nuclear-armed adversaries have continued to expand and modernize their forces since the President made this speech, do you believe that unilateral disarmament in the face of increasing threats would improve the security of the United States and its allies?

Mr. AUSTIN. I am generally aware of public reporting that both China and Russia continue to invest in and expand their nuclear weapons capabilities. If confirmed, I will undertake a deeper review both of United States nuclear posture and of the nuclear weapons capabilities of Russia and China.

16. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, over the past 8 years, China, Russia, and North Korea have all expanded and modernized their nuclear arsenals, and are continuing to do so. Given these actions and the increasing nuclear threat to the United States and its allies, do you believe it is prudent to significantly alter U.S. policies that have helped deter nuclear aggression for over 70 years?

Mr. AUSTIN. I am generally aware of public reporting that China, Russia and North Korea continue to invest in and expand their nuclear weapons capabilities. If confirmed, I will undertake a deeper review both of United States nuclear posture and of the nuclear weapons capabilities of China, Russia and North Korea to determine how the United States must posture itself to effectively deter aggression against the United States and its allies and partners.

17. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, in November 2020, NATO's [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] Secretary General stated that, "Simply giving up our deterrent without any guarantees that others will do the same is a dangerous option because a world where Russia, China, North Korea and others have nuclear weapons, but NATO does not, is not a safer world." Do you agree with the Secretary General that the world is a safer place due to the existence of an effective U.S. nuclear deterrent and the extended deterrence assurances we provide to our allies?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

18. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, will you support robust consultations with U.S. allies prior to considering any changes in U.S. nuclear posture or policy that could undermine their security?

Mr. AUSTIN. The United States has long committed to extending nuclear deterrence to a number of treaty allies. Meaningful consultation is fundamental to any alliance. Given their reliance on such security guarantees, if confirmed, I expect to work closely with allies to ensure both their continued security and the continued security of the United States.

19. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, in a recently completed report to Congress by the nonpartisan Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), researchers assessed that adopting a “no first use” (NFU) nuclear policy would likely undermine allied confidence in U.S. security guarantees, encourage aggression by adversaries, and have no effect on international non-proliferation efforts. IDA concluded that, “. . . the weight of the evidence indicates significant potential for [adoption of a] No First Use [policy] to impart more harm than good.” In your responses to the questions you were provided prior to your confirmation hearing, you took no position on “no first use,” noting simply that the Department of Defense would participate in a later review of U.S. policies. While I’m sure this is accurate, the committee would like to understand your own views on whether adoption of a “no first use” policy, would it be advisable, given the increasing threat of Russia’s, China’s, and North Korea’s expanding arsenals?

Mr. AUSTIN. I have not had the opportunity to review the referenced report. As you note, I anticipate that President Biden will direct the interagency to conduct a thorough set of strategic reviews, including of U.S. nuclear posture and declaratory policy. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense plays an active role in this review, and also that any such review assesses the conclusions in the referenced report.

20. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, in a recent opinion, the Washington Post editorial board endorsed efforts to “de-alert” the U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force, invoking the long discredited myth of the “hair-trigger alert”. Up to this point, every U.S. Administration has soundly rejected the idea of de-alerting U.S. ICBMs, noting that such measures are inherently unverifiable, and that such an action could be extremely destabilizing in a crisis—increasing the chances of an inadvertent launch. Given the increasing salience of nuclear weapons and the growing arsenals of China, Russia, and North Korea, do you believe it is prudent to reduce the United States ability to respond to nuclear attacks against the United States or its allies in a timely manner?

Mr. AUSTIN. I strongly support any measure that reduces the chances of a catastrophic miscalculation between nuclear powers. I believe the Department of Defense must endeavor to ensure the President has the maximum possible decision space in a time of crisis. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing all opportunities to maximize Presidential decision time and potential means to minimize the risk of miscalculation. However, the de-alerting of ICBMs, in and of itself, does not appear to offer a verifiable and stabilizing means to achieve these important objectives.

MISSILE DEFENSE POLICY

21. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, since the completion of the 2019 Missile Defense Review, a number of changes have occurred in the interim that could greatly affect the scope and architecture of a future global U.S. missile defense system. Do you support the conduct of a new Missile Defense Review? If so, when would you expect such a review to be completed?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will have the incoming team review current and projected threats and our missile defense programs and posture and, where appropriate, adjust our approach. Any potential updates to this approach would be informed by a new National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy.

22. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, your former employer, Raytheon Technologies, is a major manufacturer of the Department of Defense’s array of missile defense systems. With your commitment to recuse yourself from matters involving your former employer, for possibly the entirety of this 4 year Administration, you will be largely removed from discussions on the structure of major missile defense systems. If confirmed, how will you structure your leadership team to oversee the development of missile defense policies and manage the associated programs to ensure effective oversight, while upholding the terms of your recusal and avoiding the appearance of undue influence?

Mr. AUSTIN. During the period of my recusal, any matters involving Raytheon will be referred to the Deputy Secretary or other senior official without my knowledge or involvement. With respect to the issue of seeking a waiver I do not expect to do that or to need one, but if such an unanticipated circumstance were to arise I would consider available alternatives to a waiver before seeking one and would consult very carefully with agency ethics officials. If I’m privileged enough to be confirmed, I can pledge to you I will be mindful of not only the legal requirements that govern my conduct, but also of the appearances to ensure that the public has no reason to question my impartiality, and I will consult with the DOD career ethics officials

on these issues and require everyone who serves with me to ensure public service is and will remain a public trust.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF LIGADO'S TERRESTRIAL NETWORK

23. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, last year, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved a license for Ligado to build a ground terrestrial network in frequencies that traditionally have been used only for satellites. DOD is on record, and in fact all affected Federal agencies are on record too, strongly opposing it. Federal agencies opposed to the Ligado proposal include the Departments of Defense, Commerce, Interior, Justice, Homeland Security, Energy, and Transportation, as well as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Science Foundation, Coast Guard, Federal Aviation Administration, and National Executive Committee for Space-Based Positioning, Navigation, and Timing. The Department of Defense has been opposed for a decade because it poses significant risk to the national global positioning system (GPS) system and all military users of it. Are you familiar with this issue? If yes, do think the FCC license to Ligado in its current form is wise?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will assess this issue and its impact on DOD's GPS system.

24. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, our Committee alongside DOD have been fighting this proposal for a decade, and several previous Secretaries of Defense have been consistently and strongly opposed to allowing the Ligado network to go forward. Do you share your predecessor's views that the Ligado network, if deployed, will be damaging to the Department's ability to train in peacetime and possibly could degrade combat operations in wartime as a result, and potentially poses risks to the safety of soldiers, marines, airmen, and sailors?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will assess this issue and its impact on DOD's GPS system.

25. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, if confirmed by the Senate, will you personally work with the new White House Staff, the National Security Council, and the new FCC Chairman to temporarily suspend Ligado's terrestrial authority so that the new Administration can review the ill-advised FCC decision made by the outgoing Administration and ensure it is in the best interest of DOD, the Federal Government, and the hundreds of millions of consumers and businesses that rely on GPS to allow Ligado to deploy a ground based network that interferes with the GPS system?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will assess this issue and its impact on DOD's GPS system.

26. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, we worked tirelessly to get language in the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA that requires DOD to engage the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to conduct an independent review of the FCC Ligado Order. Working in tandem, are you in favor of FCC conducting a new formal, fair, and fully transparent review of the Ligado's ability to provide terrestrial services that preserves the mission and safety requirements of all Federal agencies including Defense, obtains an outcome that does not require the Department of Defense to incur billions of dollars of unnecessary costs to change all its GPS receivers on combat vehicles, aircraft, helicopters, ships, and weapons; and that allows all Federal Departments and agencies and the American industrial groups adversely affected by the previous Administration's FCC decision to formally submit input through the normal process that FCC uses on other important spectrum decisions?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will assess this issue and its impact on DOD's GPS system.

27. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, do you believe that it is essential for the FCC to resolve this issue in a manner that assures no risk to the lives of U.S. soldiers in peacetime training, combat, or emergency response missions by the National Guard?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I do believe that it is essential for the FCC to work with the NTIA to resolve this issues in a manner that assures no risk to lives.

28. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, management of the radiocommunications spectrum is divided between the FCC, which handles non-Federal spectrum use, and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, or NTIA, on behalf

of all Federal agencies. That sounds straightforward, but the use of one spectrum band, for example for private use, can affect another spectrum, for example for Federal use. What process should the FCC go through to make sure its proposed use of spectrum does not negatively affect use of spectrum by Federal agencies like DOD?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will work with the current Administration to ensure our spectrum management processes are respected and followed.

29. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, the Department manages the global positioning system, or GPS, which is a critical asset not only for the Department, but for other Federal agencies and the hundreds of millions of consumers that rely on it every day. DOD has an obvious role with respect to the physical components of GPS. But the success of GPS also rests on the radiofrequency spectrum it uses. And in order for that spectrum to be able to continue to deliver GPS signals, it must not receive interference from other spectrum uses—private and Federal. What steps will you take to ensure that there is no harmful interference to GPS?

Mr. AUSTIN. I will work with NTIA, FCC and other appropriate parties by strengthening regulations, policies and laws regarding GPS to ensure there is no harmful interference to GPS spectrum.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

30. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, unclassified TTPs [tactics, techniques, and procedures], ROEs [rules of engagement], and RUFs [requests for use of facility] are not protected from release under the current Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) exemptions, do you see this as a potential problem?

Mr. AUSTIN. While transparency is critical to public oversight of government operations, we must balance transparency with the need to protect certain types of information from release when such release may impact military operations and could risk the lives of our servicemembers. The release of TTPs, ROEs, and RUFs, in some circumstances, may present a risk to operations and the force if such information is disclosed to the public without adequate safeguards. If confirmed, I intend to further examine options for protecting such information from improper release while still maintaining an emphasis on transparency.

31. Senator INHOFE. Mr. Austin, what options are available to protect our servicemembers from our adversaries who may request such documents through FOIA and then use the information released to harm American servicemembers?

Mr. AUSTIN. Under current law, there are limited options for withholding such information from release when it is requested pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. As previously discussed, this may, in some circumstances, create a risk to military operations and U.S. forces, especially when such information falls into the hands of an adversary. Although classification of such information would allow us to limit release, the threshold for classification may not be met under applicable authorities and would also limit its application and our ability to adequately disseminate such information to servicemembers in the field. If confirmed, I intend to further examine options for protecting such information from improper release while still maintaining an emphasis on transparency.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROGER WICKER

FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION OPERATIONS (FONOPS) ACROSS THE TAIWAN STRAIT

32. Senator WICKER. Mr. Austin, last year the United States Navy conducted 11 transits in the Taiwan Strait, demonstrating our Nation's commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. With Chinese forces expanding their reach in the Western Pacific, United States military presence—particularly through freedom of navigation and transit—has become ever more important to regional stability. Will you continue these presence missions if confirmed as Secretary of Defense?

Mr. AUSTIN. Presence operations and transits through international straits like the Taiwan Strait can provide a deterrent effect to competitors and present opportunities to cooperate with regional security partners and allies. They can also demonstrate our commitment to freedom of the seas and, in the case of Taiwan Strait transits, a free and open Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, this assessment will help shape my approach to approving operations or providing advice to the President.

HYPERSONIC MISSILE PROPULSION SUPPLIERS

33. Senator WICKER. Mr. Austin, Congress and the National Defense Strategy have made it a top priority to develop and acquire hypersonic missile capabilities, given our near-peer competition with Russia and China. At the same time, Congress has spent billions to strengthen our fragile industrial base across a range of capabilities. But much of our industrial base is being consolidated, with large defense firms buying up small suppliers. For example, news recently emerged that Lockheed Martin is seeking to acquire Aerojet Rocketdyne, the last remaining independent missile propulsion company. What are your views on the consolidation of industrial base capabilities as seen in cases like this?

Mr. AUSTIN. Consolidation within the defense industrial base is sometimes necessary to ensure that a particular capability remains viable. Many defense industrial base suppliers have little to no commercial business, which would help them remain healthy and resilient in times where DOD procurement is low. This is especially true in the missile and missile propulsion industry, which are almost 100 percent dependent on DOD business. However, too much consolidation can have negative consequences, including the lack of competition, and reduced industry investment in research and development necessary to keep DOD systems technologically superior. DOD should work with stakeholders within the Services and Agencies to understand the potential impacts of this particular transaction, and weigh these factors when assessing it.

34. Senator WICKER. Mr. Austin, are you concerned about the impact this kind of acquisition could have on our numerous missile programs that are not under contract to Lockheed Martin?

Mr. AUSTIN. I will work with our interagency partners to examine this potential transaction. Diversity and competition within the industrial base a necessary to ensure the Department remains able to purchase the greatest technology at fair and reasonable prices. Consolidation can be disruptive to this goal, so all potential impacts to the missile and space launch systems involved in this transaction will be assessed as part of the decision making process.

 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

COVID-19

35. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, you have been involved in complicated and sophisticated logistics missions during your career. Does the military use best practices when shipping valuable resources around the country and the world?

Mr. AUSTIN. The military Services ship valuable and precious cargo around the country and the world every day. Military logisticians strive to maximize efficiency and effectiveness recognizing they are stewards of the taxpayer's dollars. I know the Services have benefitted from a close relationship with industry that have enabled adoption of recognized best practices in Tactics, Techniques and Procedures. I am also confident DOD logisticians will continually strive to improve processes and not be satisfied with current levels of efficiency.

36. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, would you deviate from those best practices in the midst of a critical mission?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I would strive to find the optimal solution for mission requirements.

37. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, you may know that Operation Warp Speed utilized a new pharmaceutical distribution system for the COVID vaccine instead of using the Nation's full end-to-end and time-tested and trusted distribution system. Can you and your staff commit to reviewing the vaccine distribution challenges and to recommend how the full distribution system can be brought in to get vaccines from the manufacturer to the "last mile" for shots to get in arms?

Mr. AUSTIN. Operation Warp Speed is a partnership between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Defense. If confirmed, I will work with our partners at the Department of Health and Human Services to review any vaccine distribution challenges and recommend necessary improvements.

SEMICONDUCTORS

38. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, a recent Pentagon report on the defense industrial base highlighted the importance of semiconductors to our national security.

The report states that microelectronics “are critical to producing and maintaining existing military systems, for advancing emerging technologies like AI, 5G, and quantum computing, and for sustaining critical infrastructure and indeed, our entire modern economy” and that microelectronics “are in nearly everything, including the most complex weapons the Department of Defense buys, such as Aegis warships, the F-35 joint strike fighter, soldier systems, and our nuclear weapons and their command-and-control—which together form the backbone of our national defense.” The Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act included important provisions to incentivize domestic semiconductor manufacturing in order to reverse the decline in U.S. semiconductor manufacturing capacity. Do you view it as a priority to fund incentives for semiconductor manufacturing?

Mr. AUSTIN. I understand that the Department worked very closely with Congress in developing the landmark microelectronics legislation included in the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA. This provides a foundation from which DOD, along with our inter-agency partners, can start the process of reshoring microelectronics manufacturing, packaging, and testing capability. This will require a multi-pronged approach, which includes funding, tax incentives, workforce credits, and other mechanisms that will make U.S. suppliers be cost competitive.

39. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, how important is it that the United States grow its share of domestic manufacturing in critical industries such as semiconductors?

Mr. AUSTIN. The DOD has diversified supply chains by partnering with allied nations to utilize or develop capability in those countries. However, growing U.S. capability in certain critical areas such as semiconductor manufacturing may be necessary to ensure a stable and secure supply of these items. DOD will make investments in domestic supply, where appropriate.

40. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, how do you and the Department of Defense plan on working with Congress to fund these priorities?

Mr. AUSTIN. Continuing to assess the industrial base to determine areas of highest risk will be a Department priority. Once these risks are identified, DOD can formulate strategies and roadmaps to mitigate them. Sharing these strategies and implementation plans with Congressional members responsible for authorizing and appropriating funding should assist the Department with obtaining the funding necessary to execute these strategies.

41. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, what role do you envision your Department playing in funding research in critical technologies, such as semiconductors?

Mr. AUSTIN. The U.S. must maintain a competitive edge to enable us to defeat our adversaries. This requires DOD funding for research in multiple critical technology areas that will help us maintain the advantage we need to ensure our national security. We must have a balanced portfolio that maintains our current systems, while enabling us to make the technological advances that will ensure that our future systems are technologically superior.

U.S. GREEN BERETS FRATRICIDE INCIDENT

42. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, in 2014 there was an investigation into the fratricide of five Green Berets on June 9, 2014. Could you detail the nature of your involvement in this investigation?

Mr. AUSTIN. As the Commanding General of United States Central Command, I directed an investigation into the airstrike on June 9, 2014 that was alleged to have resulted in the deaths of five United States soldiers and one Afghan soldier and approved the findings of the Army 15–6 investigation.

43. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, can you explain why you appointed Air Force Major General Jeffrey L. Harrigan to run this investigation despite his affiliation with one of the Services involved in the incident?

Mr. AUSTIN. I appointed Major General Jeffrey Harrigan given his extensive operational experience. He was appointed to conduct the investigation with a full investigative team, including three Assisting Investigating Officers, Administrative Support, and a Legal Advisor.

44. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, the investigation concluded: “... key members executing the close air support mission collectively failed to effectively execute the fundamentals, which resulted in poor situational awareness and improper target identification.” The report appears to share blame between the B-1 crew, Ground

Force Commander (GFC), and Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC). Do you agree with the conclusion of this investigation?

Mr. AUSTIN. As Commanding General of United States Central Command, I approved the findings of the investigation.

45. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, could you confirm whether or not the B-1 was typically used for close air support missions in Afghanistan during this time period?

Mr. AUSTIN. Although it was not originally designed for close air support missions, the B-1 was used for those purposes in Afghanistan during the relevant time period.

46. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, will you commit to ensuring that you will eradicate any training or assumptions among military personnel that the sniper targeting system used on the B-1 can be used to see strobes?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed as Secretary of Defense, I will work to ensure that our military personnel have the appropriate training and support for their activities.

47. Senator COTTON. Mr. Austin, will you commit to educating our forces on whether there are justifiable cases where the absence of infrared (IR) strobes can be used as the sole confirmer of enemy positions?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed as Secretary of Defense, I commit that I will work to ensure our military personnel are appropriately trained.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR THOM TILLIS

ECONOMIC WARFARE

48. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, many of the national security challenges we face today cut across the jurisdiction of numerous Federal agencies. This is particularly true of the nexus between economic security, industrial policy, and national security. In recent years, Congress has worked to address cross-cutting challenges like supply-chain vulnerability, weaponized Chinese capital investments in strategic United States industries, and the race to 5G. However, on the whole, the United States Government is not structured in a way that has one office take the lead on these issues. Instead, these problems are addressed in various offices across the Department of Defense (DOD), the Commerce Department, and the United States Trade Representative, among others. As Secretary of Defense, how will you work within the existing inter-agency structure to better facilitate cooperation and a more comprehensive, unified response to what are our largest and most vexing national security problems?

Mr. AUSTIN. I have extensive experience working collaboratively within the Inter-agency and among international partners. If confirmed, I will use these skills to work cooperatively within existing processes such as the Defense Production Act Title III and Committee on Foreign Investment to address the challenges facing the Defense Industrial Base.

MARINE CORPS FORCE STRUCTURE

49. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, the Marine Corps is currently undergoing a significant change in their force structure. The changes are meant to make the Marine Corps a more agile and capable force to counter adversaries in the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility. However, I have concerns, as do others, that the proposed changes will make the Marine Corps too one-dimensional. I am very concerned about the proposed changes to the Marine Corps aviation enterprise, particularly the F-35. Regardless of whether the next conflict is with a near-peer adversary or something else, the F-35 is going to be one of the Marine Corps' most effective weapons. Reducing the total number of F-35s that the Marine Corps will buy or the number of F-35s per squadron is ill-advised. If you are confirmed, will you commit to doing a full review of the Marine Corps' force structure changes and make a determination as to whether these changes are in the best interest of United States national security?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I am fully committed to reviewing the Marine Corps' force structure changes and will work with the Secretary of the Navy and the Marine Corps to ensure the force is best equipped for deterrence and combat, to include the F35.

50. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, are you aware that the Marine Corps is the only Service that does not have a special operations aviation component? The Marine

Corps' current plans call for the divestment of three rotary-wing squadrons and the retiring/re-distribution of these aircraft. I believe it would be advisable to retain these aircraft and create a special operation aviation capability. If confirmed, will you commit to looking at this issue and determining if there is merit in the Marine Corps creating a special operations aviation capability?

Mr. AUSTIN. I am aware that the Marine Corps is the only Service that does not have a special operations aviation component; however, am unaware of any critical shortfall in our existing special operations aviation capability or capacity that would necessitate the creation of a new component within the Marine Corps. The Marines do operate unmanned aviation systems within SOCOM and a select number of their aviators serve exchange tours with SOCOM'S aviation units. General Berger's effort to redesign the Marine Corps includes divesting of some capability and capacity to create opportunities for modernization —without having to seek additional funding. I commend this cost neutral approach. Any increase to a services contribution to SOCOM, such as aviation assets, is borne by that service and must be carefully considered against the range of other service requirements. In the case of the Marine Corps this includes conventional deterrence and global crisis response. If confirmed, I will commit to reviewing SOCOM's aviation requirements.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INNOVATION

51. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, for many years now there have been increasing calls for DOD to chart a bold, new path for modernization that places great emphasis on emerging technologies and partnering with the Nation's innovation community, including industry, academia, and entrepreneurs, to achieve its modernization goals. I support this effort and can look to my own State of North Carolina, to see how this type of partnership can be successful. The Research Triangle Park was founded by visionaries who saw the transformative power of bringing together universities, government and industry to spark new ideas and fuel growth. It is an innovation model that has rippled across the State and Nation, and it is one the Department should embrace. If confirmed, could you please explain your vision for modernization and how you would prioritize Department resources to align with that vision?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, working to ensure that the Department maximally accesses innovation will be among my highest priorities. This will require a concerted effort across the Department and will include universities, private industry, and nonprofit research institutions. The Department is investing nearly \$2 billion annually through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)/Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) program. These initiatives provide innovative technology solutions, and the Department is working to strengthen our partnerships with small businesses and to streamline the SBIR/STTR programs to reduce administrative red tape and lower barriers to entry. The Department also uses the Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation (SMART) program as a workforce recruitment and development platform, by assigning promising graduates to DOD research and development facilities to inject fresh talent and to improve the flow of STEM employees into the Department. If confirmed, I will endeavor to ensure these programs' success and seek additional ways to develop partnerships for innovation.

52. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, given your background in the infantry, and most recently as the former CENTCOM Commander, you have direct experience in, and understand the real issue of interoperable communications on the battlefield. The Inspector General (IG) of the Department of Defense recently put out a report entitled "Audit of United States Special Operations Command Testing and Evaluation," where they studied whether the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) fielded Special Operations-Peculiar (SO-P) equipment that met performance requirements during test and evaluation (T&E). The IG Report determined that that the SOCOM purchased and fielded six SO-P programs, valued at \$815.8 million that did not meet user needs.

Mr. AUSTIN. To prevent this same pattern from continuing and occurring in the broader DOD during modernization, what will you do to ensure the Services research, evaluate, and field capabilities that are relevant to the challenges of the future battlefield, meet the demand of the war fighter and supported by acquisition strategies that allow for the on-ramp of innovative technologies found in the industrial base?

I believe it is important that the capabilities fielded by our military have been thoroughly vetted, tested, and verified against validated end-user requirements. If I am confirmed as the Secretary of Defense, I will ensure the Military Department Secretaries, as well as ASD(SO/LIC) in his or her role exercising authority, direc-

tion, and control over special operations-peculiar administrative matters relating to the organization, training, and equipping of special operations forces, work closely with their acquisition colleagues to ensure that capabilities fielded are well researched, evaluated, and relevant (including the use of innovative technologies) so that they meet the challenges of the future battlefield. This will include requiring the Military Department Secretaries and ASD(SO/LIC) to provide close and careful oversight of DOD acquisition programs and projects, throughout the acquisition lifecycle to ensure that programs meet user needs via acquisition strategies that are well coordinated with the end-users. I will also require the Service Acquisition Executives to work with their Military Department Secretaries, the Defense Acquisition Executive, and the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation to ensure compliance with statutes and regulations, prior to the fielding or deployment of any capability for the end-user.

53. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, many disruptive technologies have been and are being developed by our commercial sector using internal investments in order to rapidly address DOD's most challenging requirements. However, DOD has a horrible track record of transitioning small prototype or technology demonstrations into a program of record in a timely and cost effective manner—a problem our adversaries do not have. Based on your past experience, what actions does DOD need to take to ensure its acquisition and budget strategy allows for timely and scaled funding of these innovative and disruptive technologies?

Mr. AUSTIN. One of the great challenges we face is recognizing and transitioning opportunistic, emerging technologies that appear outside the technology development phase of an acquisition program. In these cases the Department needs to be more effective at assessing the potential of these technologies and ensuring barriers to entry are low. If confirmed, I will work with the Services to improve mechanisms for planned and opportunistic technology transition into DOD systems. I would also foster a culture of appropriate risk-taking in order to accelerate the identification and integration of these emerging technologies.

54. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, will you commit to briefing this committee on DOD actions being taken to integrate disruptive technology and scaling innovation as part of your first Defense Planning Guidance?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

55. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, Beijing published its latest Five-Year Plan for China's development in November 2020. For the first time, the plan calls for the development of disruptive technologies in its military. The July 17, 2020 Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report on Emerging Military Technologies stated that China and Russia are making steady progress in developing advanced military technologies to include advanced computing, artificial intelligence, autonomy, robotics, directed energy, hypersonics, biotechnology, and quantum technology. What is your assessment of the impact these disruptive technologies could have on our national security?

The first military to employ quantum technology, advanced computing, artificial intelligence and autonomy at scale and in combination will have a significant asymmetric advantage. If confirmed, I will work with the entire Defense ecosystem to include laboratories, universities, non-traditional centers of innovation, and traditional industry partners to ensure that we are at the cutting edge of developing these disruptive technologies. I will strive to ensure we are not merely fielding the next evolutionary system, but can achieve overmatch with revolutionary combinations of technology.

56. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, how do the efforts to develop these technologies in the United States compare to China and Russia?

Mr. AUSTIN. While details are limited in an unclassified setting, the United States is behind Russia and China in certain technology areas. For example, in Hypersonics, China and Russia are focused on fielding operational systems, while the United States is currently demonstrating prototypes with leave-behind capabilities. If confirmed, I will review intelligence briefings on all the technology areas and commit to sharing details on our progress versus our adversaries with the committee upon request.

57. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, what priority would you place on the investment and development of disruptive technologies to maintain technological superiority over China and Russia?

Mr. AUSTIN. The current list of modernization priorities has been drawn directly from the 2018 National Defense Strategy, with input from stakeholders across the DOD enterprise. DOD has identified eleven key areas in which investment to develop next generation operational capabilities is imperative: 5G, hypersonics; fully networked C3; directed energy; cyber; space; quantum science; artificial intelligence (AI)/machine learning; microelectronics; autonomy; and biotechnology. The Department also invests in a broad portfolio of technologies to drive future capability improvements and to create technological advantage. If confirmed, I will ensure investment and development of disruptive technologies remains a top priority.

58. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, how would you scale innovation and disruptive technology development across the Services?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Fiscal Year 2017 NDAA reestablished and elevated the USD(R&E) to focus strategically on the integration and synchronization of technology development programs across the Department. If confirmed, I will support the USD(R&E) in ensuring that the Department's technology investments are appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all military departments and Agencies.

NORTH CAROLINA

59. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, a little over a year ago, the United States killed Major General Qasem Soleimani. This triggered several events, one of which was deployment of the entire Global Response Force (GRF) from Fort Bragg, NC. This marked the first time the entire brigade from the 82nd Airborne was deployed since Panama in 1989. To facilitate such deployments, Pope Army Airfield (AAF), specifically, the Green Ramp, is used. However, this airfield has not been well cared for since being transferred to the Army. The deployment in January 2020 of the GRF highlighted many of the deficiencies at Pope AAF from deferred maintenance to neglect. The GRF and various other units at Fort Bragg are national level assets. They need proper infrastructure to deploy rapidly and project force. If you are confirmed as Secretary of Defense, will you commit that the defense budget will contain adequate funding to repair and properly maintain Pope AAF?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Army remains committed to ensuring Pope Army Airfield can support all deployment missions. In fiscal year 2021, the Army is funding a \$90 million project to make critical improvements to the primary runway and lighting system. The Army has also identified future requirements to improve the airfield, totaling \$224 million in Military Construction, as well as in Restoration and Modernization funding. These requirements will be a priority for funding within the Army's Facility Investment Plan.

60. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, will you also commit to investment in lengthening the runway at Pope AAF to accommodate a fully loaded C-17?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Army recognizes the requirement to extend the Pope AAF runway to accommodate strategic airlift for the unique military units stationed there. This requirement will be assessed against other infrastructure needs across the Army enterprise within the Army's Facility Investment Plan.

China

61. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, in June 2020, DOD released a list of 20 companies it says are controlled by the Chinese military. One of these companies is the Chinese Rail Rollingstock Corporation (CRRC). Over the past 5 years, CRRC has made alarming inroads into the United States market. This state-owned and directed company has made aggressive advances into the United States by using state-backed financing, below-market pricing, and other anti-competitive tactics to decimate domestic railcar manufacturing with the single end goal of producing all railcars in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Currently, CRRC also secured more than \$2.6 billion in United States taxpayer-supported transit contracts to provide passenger railcars for the cities of Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. As Secretary, what will you do to ensure the DOD's infrastructure is secure from a Chinese state-owned enterprise, such as CRRC, that has a significant and troubling footprint in the United States?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will review the Department's efforts to ensure the integrity of DOD supply chains, support the ability of American businesses to withstand PRC coercion, protect American intellectual property, and invest in the research and development of emerging technologies.

62. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, China provides a competitive advantage to its state-owned enterprises through generous, below-market government financing for

their own ventures, as well as for their customers. This gives Chinese businesses—that are extensions of their own government—a tremendous unfair advantage, and the potential to decimate United States competitors, often in highly sensitive industries like the rail sector. Given the potentially dire implications for United States jobs, our manufacturing base and our national security interests of this trend, are you open to working to address this challenge?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I am absolutely open to working with Congress and my inter-agency counterparts to address this challenge.

TAIWAN RELATIONS

63. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, the bipartisan Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI), which was an important part in the latest Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA, reconfirms the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region by significantly strengthening the military capabilities to deter adversaries across the region. How do you envision the PDI be implemented to fully defend United States interests and those of our allies such as Taiwan?

Mr. AUSTIN. I believe the Pacific Deterrence Initiative will help focus attention on the progress the United States is making to establish a more distributed and resilient posture that deters China's aggression and reassures our allies and partners, including Taiwan. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to ensure its effective implementation.

64. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 stipulates that the United States makes available necessary defensive articles and services for Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability. This is one of America's most important commitments to the security of Taiwan and to the stability of the Indo-Pacific region. The Trump administration over the last 4 years has adopted a regularized Taiwan arms sales process and sold Taiwan over \$15 billion worth of weaponry. As the Secretary of Defense, how do you evaluate this policy and do you intend to continue the policy of regularized arms sales to Taiwan?

Mr. AUSTIN. President Biden has said many times that United States support for Taiwan must remain strong, principled, and bipartisan, in line with longstanding American commitments to the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances. We will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan. If confirmed, I will also ensure the United States meets our commitment to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability.

GEORGIA

65. Senator TILLIS. Mr. Austin, will you support and work with Georgia, a key United States ally, during your tenure to counter Russia aggression and advance Georgia's goal of membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions such as NATO?

Mr. AUSTIN. I intend to support the ongoing United States and NATO efforts focused on improving Georgia's ability to deter aggression, defend its territory, contribute to regional security, and build resilience against Russian malign influence. I fully agree with the 2008 NATO Summit declaration that states Georgia will one day become a member of NATO, and I will ensure that DOD continues to support the implementation of reforms that advance Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

SOUTH CHINA SEA FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION OPERATIONS

66. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, in 2015, I worked with then-Chairman John McCain to pressure the Department of Defense to restore Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) to the South China Sea, which had been halted due to only tangentially-related political issues. In fact, through reporting and oversight at the time, it was revealed that Secretary of State John Kerry effectively worked to minimize desires of the Department of Defense to conduct these FONOPs in favor of using that as leverage against China in climate change negotiations. As a direct result, China reclaimed and militarized several "islands" in the South China Sea. If confirmed, Mr. Austin, if a similar situation presents itself, how would you confront this problem and effectively advocate for the Department of Defense's priorities broadly, and specifically as it relates to these FONOPs? What is your personal view on this situation?

Mr. AUSTIN. Use of FONOPs is in the national interest. Upholding the law of the sea, as part of the rules-based international order, benefits the United States, and

our allies and partners. The United States' national interest in freedom of the seas and freedom of navigation dates back to the very founding of our country. Upholding the law of the sea is a fundamental strategic interest on which the global mobility of U.S. forces depends.

67. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, can you commit that—if recommended by your military and civilian subordinates—you will continue routine and regular FONOPs both in the South China Sea and around the world?

Mr. AUSTIN. I will, of course, commit to listening to the military and civilian policy professionals in the Department, as well as the geographic combatant commanders who have direct control over operations in their areas of responsibility. The United States challenges excessive maritime claims around the world and I can assure you that, if confirmed, the United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows.

KC-46 BASING

68. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, the previous Senate-confirmed Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Mark Esper acknowledged that collocation of 100 5th-Generation Fighters with KC-46 tankers would provide our Nation with “extreme strategic reach”. The commander of U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM), General Stephen Lyons, USA, has stated: “The aerial refueling fleet continues to underpin the Joint Force’s ability to deploy an immediate force across all NDS mission areas ...” Given Alaska’s beddown of F-35s, access to expansive training ranges, and proximity to several high-priority regions, will you commit—if confirmed—to take a personal look at tanker basing in Alaska—specifically as it relates to the KC-46—to ensure our Nation pursues a strategy-driven decision rather than a budget-driven one?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes. Department decisions, to include the Department of the Air Force tanker decisions, should be strategy-driven, budget-informed decisions. I will work with the DAF and DOD experts to ensure the tanker beddowns best meet all national priorities.

69. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, in your personal opinion, would you agree with former SECDEF Mark Esper that collocation of 100 5th-Generation Fighters with KC-46 tankers in Alaska would provide extreme strategic reach to the United States? Please elaborate on how that kind of air power could affect our power projection posture, strengthen our alliances, and message to our adversaries.

Mr. AUSTIN. Our 5th Generation fighter fleet provides strategic advantages across the whole national defense spectrum providing a deterrence to potential aggressors and security to our allies. These assets and their support systems, to include tankers, must be beddown in the locations that most efficiently meet steady state and COCOM requirements, and provide the flexibility for contingency operations. I will work with the DAF and DOD experts to ensure our force structure is designed to best meet these priorities.

GREAT POWER COMPETITION IN THE ARCTIC

70. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, given the National Defense Strategy’s focus on great power competition and the rapid development of Russia and China’s capabilities in the Arctic, in your personal opinion, would you agree that the Arctic is an emerging front-line for great power competition and rivalry? Please elaborate on the threats the United States faces from our great power competitors—Russia and China—in this region.

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I agree that the Arctic is a region of increasing competitive activity among great powers, including China and Russia. The challenges these competitors pose in the Arctic are discrete. Russia approaches the Arctic largely from a territorial defense perspective. It is advancing its interests through a modest increase in Arctic-based forces, which are intended to improve its operational capability in northern latitudes and to exert greater control of the Northern Sea Route. China is also focused on increasing its influence in the region, primarily through predatory economic behavior.

71. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, in your personal opinion, what makes Alaska an important strategic region for the United States, and why would our adversaries want to limit our presence and power projection capabilities in the Arctic region? Please elaborate.

Mr. AUSTIN. Alaska’s proximity to the Arctic, Russia, East Asia, and the Bering Strait makes the state a strategically important region for our country. I believe this

importance will continue to increase given that melting sea ice is allowing increased Chinese and Russian presence in the region—particularly passage through the Arctic between the narrow Bering Strait and Atlantic Ocean—access that could alter the strategic balance of the region.

If confirmed, I will assess Chinese and Russian designs further and consult allies and partners on the strategy, posture, and capabilities required to ensure a stable and open Arctic, as well as to protect the Homeland, support efforts to protect our economic interests, and deter any competitor aggression.

72. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, in your personal opinion, what specific capability gaps presently exist that inhibit our ability to effectively project and sustain power in the Arctic and compete with Russia and China in the northern latitudes? Please elaborate on what these gaps are and how you would attempt to address them.

Mr. AUSTIN. I understand the Department has identified a range of capability needs, including: improved domain awareness systems; more robust communications capabilities; increased Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance; and improved environmental modelling. In addressing these capability needs, if confirmed as Secretary, I will assess how DOD can continue to balance consideration of investments for the Arctic region with broader capability needs of the Joint Force as outlined in an updated National Defense Strategy.

73. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, in your personal opinion, do we have the necessary infrastructure—like Strategic Arctic Ports and expeditionary airfields—to meet our Nation's strategies, to effectively project and sustain power in the Arctic, and to compete with Russia and China in the northern latitudes?

Mr. AUSTIN. I understand that DOD is concluding an examination of the need for a strategic port(s) in the Arctic, pursuant to Section 1752 of the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA, "Department of Defense Designation of Strategic Arctic Ports." If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the Department's analysis and making the necessary infrastructure decisions based on the range of strategic, political-military, operational, fiscal, and other factors involved.

74. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, as you may be aware the Arctic has the need for some type of functional port infrastructure to help support Department of Defense and U.S. Coast Guard requirements. The nearest Department of Defense Strategic Seaport is the Port of Anchorage; which is some 1,500 nautical miles from the Arctic Circle. That is equivalent to asking Boston to cover Miami on the East Coast. Would you agree that our Nation needs a Strategic Arctic Port? Please explain.

Mr. AUSTIN. Based on my understanding of ongoing Departmental analysis as required by statute, the results of the Section 1752 study on the 'designation of strategic Arctic ports' will help identify the Department's overall Arctic infrastructure and capability needs. I believe that potential infrastructure gaps in the Arctic (which includes, but are not limited to, Alaska) would need to be considered in the context of DOD's global mission demands and defense priorities. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the Department's analysis, informed by U.S. interagency perspectives, on strategic Arctic ports to determine if any adjustments are appropriate.

75. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, in President Donald Trump's June 9, 2020 "Memorandum on Safeguarding U.S. National Interests in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions," President Trump directed the development and execution of "a polar security icebreaking fleet acquisition program that supports our national interests in the Arctic and Antarctic regions." The memo also directed a look at two U.S. bases for their ships. If confirmed, what specifically will you do to advocate to President Biden for the strategic needs outlined in the President Trump's memo and continue the positive direction outline in this document?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I believe it would be appropriate to support DHS' efforts to bolster its icebreaking capability, which directly supports the U.S. Coast Guard's icebreaking mission. I would defer to the Secretary of Homeland Defense to identify the best means to resource DHS's proposed icebreaker capability, to include which bases it believes would best support its operational requirements. If confirmed, I will assess these requirements in the context of a new National Defense Strategy to inform DOD's support of defense-related Arctic issues.

ICE-HARDENING NAVY SHIPS FOR ARCTIC FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION OPERATIONS

76. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, in your personal opinion, do we have the right mix of Navy surface ships to visibly contest illegal maritime claims and guarantee

a free and open maritime domain year-round in the Arctic? If yes, please explain how this will be executed with the current inventory.

Mr. AUSTIN. I have not yet reviewed the full U.S. posture and capabilities, including Navy surface ships, in the Arctic, or that of our allies and partners. If confirmed, I will assess the situation and consult allies and partners on the strategy and posture required to ensure a stable and open Arctic, as well as to protect the Homeland, our economic interests, and deter aggression.

77. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, in your personal opinion, what are the risks associated with relying on the United States Coast Guard alone to project the force presence we need in the Arctic; especially, given their limited kinetic capability?

Mr. AUSTIN. I have serious concerns about the Russian military buildup and aggressive behavior in the Arctic, as well as Chinese intentions in the region. Ice operations is one of the Coast Guard's 11 official missions and they provide United States-flagged icebreakers capable of providing year-round access to the Polar Regions. The Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard are an integrated naval service and we need to apply naval power in the Arctic Region with joint forces, interagency teammates, allies, and partners. If confirmed, I will assess the situation and challenge the Navy-Marine Corps-Coast Guard team to evolve and expand the range of integrated capabilities to achieve enduring national interests in the region, region, in support of interagency partners and in concert with our allies.

78. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, the previous Senate-confirmed Secretary of Defense said in response to a question for the record: "The Arctic is strategic terrain and is a potential strategic corridor between the Indo-Pacific region, Europe, and the United States Homeland." Do you agree with this statement, and if Russia were to deny access to vital United States/international shipping in the Arctic region, could the Department and U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) provide the President the option of conducting a surface FONOP to challenge the act?

Mr. AUSTIN. I agree that the Arctic is strategic terrain and is a potential strategic corridor between the Indo-Pacific region, Europe, and the United States Homeland. If confirmed, I plan to assess and review the full range of Arctic defense missions, in the context of other global defense priorities and the new defense strategy.

MISSILE DEFENSE

79. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, the National Defense Strategy articulates the top Defense objective as: "defending the Homeland from attack"; a vital component of meeting that objective is our Nation's missile defense capabilities. Unfortunately, we are trending in the wrong direction regarding this issue—North Korea and Iran continue to expand the quantity, range and lethality of their arsenals. As do our top great power competitors—Russia and China. Yet, as these threats trend upward, the budget allocated to the Missile Defense Agency trends downward. Will you commit—if confirmed—to work with this committee to ensure adequate resources are allocated toward modernizing and fielding a robust missile defense capability—commensurate with current and future threats?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will assess our missile defense capabilities and investments in the context of a new National Defense Strategy and work with Congress to maintain transparency about any planned improvements or adjustments.

80. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, the United States has consistently held that it will accept no limitations on its missile defense systems. Any such limitations could constrain or preclude missile defense technologies and options necessary in the future to protect the American people, its forces, and allies and partners. Would you agree that our missile defense capabilities should NOT be limited, especially since they are defensive in nature, as part of any future arms control negotiations or agreements? Please elaborate.

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed I will work to align U.S. missile defenses with our new National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy in an effort to continue to provide critical protection to U.S. interests. As far as arms control, I defer to the incoming Secretary of State and the Administration for the details of how these negotiations may be conducted.

81. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, from a national security perspective, the planned Next Generation Interceptor (NGI) gives you complete capabilities needed to defend against rogue nation threats, but not until 2030. I included language in the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA—which recently passed—mandating that DOD comprehensively look at an Interim-Ground-based Interceptor (GBI) solution to deliver capa-

bility by 2026. In your personal opinion, in addition to fielding NGI, would the Department prefer to see an interim solution—fielded years ahead of NGI—in order to boost our limited Homeland missile defense capability?

Mr. AUSTIN. In my opinion, the Department should forego an interim solution and proceed directly with NGI. The Department will be awarding up to two contracts for NGI by the second quarter of fiscal year 2021. The fastest path for delivery of capability to protect the Homeland are those contracts for the NGI.

82. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, can I get your commitment to prioritize the effort—either an interim capability or NGI—to as rapidly as possible deliver additional and much-needed missile defense capability and capacity to defend of America’s Homeland?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes. The Department will be awarding up to two contracts for NGI within the next several weeks. The fastest path for delivery of capability to protect the Homeland are those contracts for the NGI. Carrying two prime contractors on this effort will create an environment with competition, where early delivery is incentivized.

83. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, the missile capabilities possessed by rogue nations—North Korea and Iran—continue to rapidly evolve. The New York Times recently reported that North Korea showcased the country’s “largest-ever” Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) a month ago, and revealed a new submarine-launched ballistic missile just last week. Provided the presence of these very real and capable threats to our Nation’s Homeland, how quickly should the 44 GBIs currently postured be expanded—as authorized by Congress—to present a more credible defense of the American people?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will work to develop effective and affordable solutions responsive to evolving missile threats to the U.S. Homeland. I know that Congress has authorized the Next Generation Interceptor program, which I understand will begin fielding additional interceptors in 2028, but I will need to review particular concepts, programs and capabilities in light of our broader defense strategy.

84. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, in your personal opinion, what will you specially advocate for support this effort?

Mr. AUSTIN. Defense of the Homeland is a key priority for DOD and missile defense is a central component of this mission. If confirmed, I will work with you to ensure our troops and the American people are protected and that the Department implements the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA requirements.

DEFENSE POSTURE REVIEW INITIATIVE

85. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, it is my view that if we look at the United States force posture in the Indo-Pacific, it is a snapshot of where United States forces were following World War II and the Korean War. In other words, it’s stale. Given that, I believe our current force posture in the priority theater is insufficient to compete in either peacetime or conflict. I continue to have concerns with implementation of Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI)—and because of that—I wrote a provision in the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) requiring a review of the current DPRI plan; which, is still ongoing. In your personal opinion, can you address more broadly your opinion of our force posture in the Indo-Pacific, and more narrowly about your opinion of DPRI?

Mr. AUSTIN. There’s no question we need a more resilient and distributed force posture in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will review our posture in the region, including the implementation of the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI), and will work with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the Military Departments and Services, and the Department of State to seek a posture that is optimized to deter aggression, reassure allies and partners, and prevail in a warfight, if necessary.

86. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, how specifically will you ensure that the DPRI review is adequately taking into consideration the criteria of strategic presence, training opportunities, host-nation support, cost, and potential for growth?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will review posture in the Indo-Pacific from all aspects including presence, capabilities, cost, logistics, training and exercises, infrastructure, and capacity building and cooperation with allies and partners.

DEVELOPMENT OF DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

87. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, China and Russia are making steady progress in developing advance military disruptive technologies to include advanced com-

puting, artificial intelligence, autonomy, robotics, directed energy, hypersonics, biotechnology, and quantum technology. What does the Department of Defense need to do to rapidly develop and field disruptive technologies to maintain technological superiority over China and Russia?

Mr. AUSTIN. I believe the Department faces a significant challenge in accelerating our adoption of new technology in ensuring that new capabilities make their way quickly from the lab into the hands of warfighters, while at the same time balancing the sustainment needs of our legacy systems. If confirmed, I will continue efforts to speed the transition of new technologies from concept to prototype to fielded capability.

READINESS

88. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, the 25 percent budget cuts from 2010 to 2015, including a reduction of close to 50,000 Army Active Duty troops, caused our military readiness to plummet. If confirmed, will you commit to working with this committee to ensure our military readiness levels remain high and at a level the American people expect?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

89. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, from oil and gas to renewables, the United States is largely energy independent. In your personal opinion, how does this American energy independence enhance our national security?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will consult with civilian and uniformed leaders to understand better the relationship between American energy independence and national security.

90. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, what specific actions will you take to further enhance American energy independence?

Mr. AUSTIN. Energy is of strategic importance to the Department. If confirmed, I will support investments in technologies that enhance the energy resilience of DOD installations and forces.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KEVIN CRAMER

OPERATION WARP SPEED

91. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, in your APQ answers, you mentioned that DOD has been a major contributor to Operation Warp Speed's (OWS) efforts to produce and distribute COVID-19 vaccines, and that if confirmed, you will review DOD's support to identify opportunities to continue or enhance this support. We have seen first-hand through one of our constituents that there is American production capacity that isn't currently being utilized to produce the vaccines we need. As Secretary of Defense, what steps will you take to guarantee that leading American manufacturers such as the one in North Dakota will be approached by Operation Warp Speed to ensure that our Nation's vaccine manufacturing capacity and supply chain can meet expected demands and that Americans have timely access to a vaccine?

Mr. AUSTIN. As I noted in the hearing, taking on COVID-19 is our most immediate national challenge, and DOD has a role to play in support of civilian agencies. I will review that support and examine ways to increase. Operation Warp Speed is a partnership between the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Defense. It is my understanding that HHS's Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) established a submission portal on its website to facilitate companies wishing to do business with the United States Government for the COVID-19 response to submit their proposals. If confirmed, we will work with our partners at the Department of Health and Human Services to review the measures that have been taken to harness the great capabilities of American manufacturers and explore additional opportunities to improve them. I also fully support President Biden's emphasis on domestic manufacturing and its critical importance to Homeland defense and national security.

92. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, as Secretary of Defense, what steps will you take to guarantee that leading American manufacturers, including Aldevron in North Dakota, will be approached by Operation Warp Speed to ensure that our Nation's vaccine manufacturing capacity is diversified and supply chain can meet expected demands and that Americans have timely access to a vaccine?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense works closely with our partners at the Department of Health and Human Services to review and improve on the measures that have been taken to harness the great capabilities of American manufacturers to meet our nation's needs for timely access to a vaccine.

93. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, will it be your and the Department's intention to sustain those relationships and engagement strategies post the COVID-19 pandemic to make certain we have rapid vaccine manufacturing capabilities for potential future pandemics and other global health challenges?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, the Department will work closely with its Federal partners and the National Security Council Directorate for Global Health Security and Biodefense as the Federal Government considers how to ensure our nation is postured more effectively for future pandemics and other global health challenges. I would expect this consideration to include how to sustain relationships and engagement strategies with commercial enterprises that have proven reliable, effective, and cost efficient during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

94. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, as you know, OWS is a multi-pronged effort of public-private partnerships to develop vaccines and therapeutics in response to the COVID-19 virus. Many of the private companies involved have various facilities overseas. Would you agree that it should be a priority of U.S. Government/OWS to engage with any and all onshore, American companies to ensure vaccine developers have the necessary manufacturing capacity to ramp up vaccine supply?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

95. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, according a Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report from November, 2020, officials at a COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing facility stated they have experienced challenges obtaining materials, including disposable reactor bags, reagents, and certain chemicals. They also state that due to global demand, they sometimes must wait 4-12 weeks for items that, before the pandemic, were typically available for shipment within 1 week. Given these claims, in addition to other public reports of disruptions to the manufacturing supply chains (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/pfizer-vaccine-supply-chain-target-slashed-1.5827779>) and challenges of scaling up production of hundreds of millions of vaccine doses, how would you, if confirmed, propose and prioritize that OWS work with domestic companies to expand manufacturing capacity in the United States?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense supports its Federal partners and the National Security Council Directorate for Global Health Security and Biodefense to evaluate how the Federal Government can best partner with domestic companies to expand manufacturing capacity in the United States.

96. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, additionally, this report highlights the difficulties surrounding new technologies such as the mRNA vaccines. It is my understanding that the mRNA vaccines use raw materials developed by companies such as Aldevron, headquartered in my home State of North Dakota, which has the largest DNA plasmid manufacturing capacity in the world. If confirmed as Secretary of Defense, will you instruct OWS to work with American industry partners to engage them in the effort of ensuring that vaccine manufacturing capacity and supply chain can meet expected demands and that Americans have timely access to a vaccine?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense works closely with our partners at the Department of Health and Human Services to review and improve on the measures that have been taken to ensure that the vaccine manufacturing capacity and the supply chain can meet the needs of the United States.

97. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, given the crucial role the Department of Defense has played by coordinating with the Department of Health and Human Services in responding to this virus on all fronts, what is your strategy to sustain the relationships forged during this time and the engagements in these partnerships post the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the United States has rapid vaccine manufacturing capabilities for potential future pandemics and other global health challenges?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense maintains relationships with its partners at the Department of Health and Human Services to meet the current and future needs of the United States.

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL WALL

98. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, on June 3rd, 1969, we lost 74 Vietnam Veterans when the USS *Frank E Evans* sank. The House has passed legislation, and the Senate has strong supporters (including Sen Schumer and 6 members of the Senate Armed Services Committee) for this effort, but the few Senators who want to prevent this effort use the Defense Department and its DODI 1300.18 rules as their crutch. But regulations have been waived, precedents have changed ... ultimately you, as Secretary of Defense, have the power to make them eligible for the wall. Do you think those who lost their lives on the USS *Frank E Evans* belong on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall?

Mr. AUSTIN. The crew members of the USS *Frank E Evans* died in a tragic accident while participating in a routine training exercise outside of the Vietnam Combat Zone. The Department is responsible for determining criteria for and validating service in a combat zone. Multiple previous Secretaries of Defense have carefully reviewed this matter, and have unanimously concluded that the crew of the USS *Frank E. Evans* does not meet the criteria of a Vietnam War casualty and they are therefore not eligible for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

99. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, do you think it is appropriate that the Defense Department is responsible for determining who is eligible to be on the Vietnam Wall?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund built The Wall with private funding to honor servicemembers who were casualties of the Vietnam War. The Department of Defense worked the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to establish the criteria and provide the initial list of names for the Memorial. As with all conflicts, it is the Department's responsibility to define and account for all casualties, these policies are established in DOD Instruction 1300.18, "Personnel Casualty Matters, Policies, and Procedures."

100. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, do you think it is appropriate that within DODI 1300.18 there are two separate sets of criteria for who is considered a casualty of the Vietnam War and who is a casualty for the purposes of being eligible to have their name on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall? (6.1.2.3.4.3. Died/wounded while on a combat/combat support mission to/from a defined combat zone) *vs* (6.5.2.4. Died while participating in, or providing direct support to, a combat mission immediately en route to or returning from a target within the defined combat zone)?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, this is appropriate because the second provision (6.5.2.4) was developed to clarify combat related casualties that may occur outside a defined combat zone, for example Navy aircraft returning from a combat mission is lost en route to the aircraft carrier. The second provision (6.5.2.4) represents a clarification to the Department's Casualty Procedures, as also reflected in DODI 1300.18, paragraph 6.1.2.2.4.3.

DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE LAWSUIT AGAINST ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

101. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, North Dakota is currently involved with a \$38 million claim under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) illegally fostered protesters on Federal land. Army Under Secretary James McPherson sent a letter to the Department of Justice (DOJ): "To avoid protracted and costly litigation, particularly in light of the harm that occurred in this case, I request that you consider engaging in settlement discussions with North Dakota to determine whether a reasonable resolution is within reach." The case has not been appealed yet by DOJ, but the expectation is this will happen. It is currently in the discovery stage and DOJ is currently only providing USACE staff for interviews and not the broader Federal Government. Do you agree with the Army's assessment that there were multiple missed opportunities to settle with North Dakota and do you also agree with Mr. McPherson's position to DOJ that the case should be settled?

Mr. AUSTIN. My understanding is that this claim under the Federal Torts Claim Act (FTCA) is now within the domain of the Department of Justice. Should the Department of Justice elect to pursue settlement of this claim, I would ensure that legal counsel within the Department of Defense provide any and all support requested by the Department of Justice.

ARCTIC SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

102. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, as the arctic region becomes more militarized by Russia and China, the Midwestern United States becomes more vulnerable to an attack from the North. Currently this area is protected by an early warning radar located in North Dakota, but that radar is over 45 years old. With the increasing threat, do you think we need to improve our situational awareness over the arctic region?

Mr. AUSTIN. I understand DOD has previously identified challenges with domain awareness at high latitudes. I have not yet reviewed the full U.S. posture in the Arctic, including defense capabilities associated with the region. If confirmed, I pledge to assess the situation, in the context of other global defense priorities, and mitigate accordingly to protect the Homeland effectively.

INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE & RECONNAISSANCE

103. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, there has been a lot of cutting of legacy programs to pay for technological advances, and a lot of these cuts are to intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) programs like the RQ-4 Global Hawk and the MQ-9 Reaper. You depended a lot on ISR as the CENTCOM commander, and most of the combatant commanders say they don't get enough ISR. Do you think we can strategically afford to cut back ISR to places like the Middle East, Africa, South America and even to some degree the Pacific?

Mr. AUSTIN. There is always a balance between meeting the ISR needs of today and investing in the ISR capabilities required to maintain this nation's technological edge against current and future adversaries. Based on my experience while USCENTCOM Commander, the combatant command requirements for ISR have always been greater than the Department's ability to meet that demand. The Joint Staff carefully weighs all the ISR requirements of combatant commanders and does its level best to support the Secretary of Defense in allocating ISR resources against the highest priority requirements of commanders. If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing our ISR requirements, allocations, and future program investments to ensure the nation has the ISR capabilities necessary to compete and win.

PASS THROUGH

104. Senator CRAMER. [Deleted.]

Mr. AUSTIN. I will provide a response in a classified forum at a future agreed upon date.

COMMERCIAL ACCESS TO EXISTING DOD FACILITIES

105. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, American commercial space companies are increasingly in need of access to unused or under-utilized infrastructure and facilities on U.S. military installations, including those at Vandenberg Air Force Base and Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. How will the Pentagon continue to work in a fair and transparent manner to maximize opportunities for private entities to utilize real property and access infrastructure, particularly new entrants? It is important that the DOD is not disadvantaging new entrants, but is working to facilitate diversity in the commercial space industry and its ability to service U.S. Government customers and become increasingly competitive in the international market.

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will consult with the Air Force and other DOD Components as necessary to gain insight into this specific question.

CHINESE STATE OWNED COMPANIES

106. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, in June 2020, the Department of Defense released a list of 20 companies it says are controlled by the Chinese military. One of these companies is the Chinese Rail Rollingstock Corporation (CRRC). Over the past 5 years, CRRC has made alarming inroads into the United States market. This state-owned and directed company has made aggressive advances into the United States by using state-backed financing, below-market pricing, and other anti-competitive tactics to decimate domestic railcar manufacturing with the single end goal of producing all railcars in the PRC. Currently, CRRC also secured more than \$2.6 billion in U.S. taxpayer-supported transit contracts to provide passenger railcars for the cities of Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. As Secretary, what will you do to ensure the Department of Defense's infrastructure is secure from a Chinese state-owned enterprise, such as CRRC, that has a significant and troubling footprint in the United States?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will review the Department's efforts to ensure the integrity of DOD supply chains, support the ability of American businesses to with-

stand PRC coercion, protect American intellectual property, and invest in the research and development of emerging technologies.

107. Senator CRAMER. Mr. Austin, China provides a competitive advantage to its state-owned enterprises through generous, below-market government financing for their own ventures, as well as for their customers. This gives Chinese businesses—that are extensions of their own government—a tremendous unfair advantage, and the potential to decimate United States competitors, often in highly sensitive industries like the rail sector. Given the potentially dire implications for U.S. jobs, our manufacturing base, and our national security interests of this trend, are you open to working to address this challenge?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I am absolutely open to working Congress and my inter-agency partners to address this challenge.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARSHA BLACKBURN

TAIWAN ARMS SALES

108. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, the Trump administration adopted a policy of regularized, non-bundled arms sales to Taiwan and sold Taiwan over \$15 billion worth of arms. If confirmed, do you intend to support continuation of this policy?

Mr. AUSTIN. President Biden has said many times that United States support for Taiwan must remain strong, principled, and bipartisan, in line with longstanding American commitments to the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances. We will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan. If confirmed, I will also ensure the United States meets our commitment to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability.

INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR FORCES TREATY

109. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, in August 2019, the United States formally withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. If confirmed, as Secretary of Defense and a member of the National Security Council, would you support a renegotiated INF Treaty with our peer and near-peer allies and adversaries?

Mr. AUSTIN. I believe arms control is in the U.S. national security interest and would support efforts to negotiate multilateral agreements that are effectively verifiable and that make the United States and its allies and partners more safe and secure.

MORAL INTEGRITY

110. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, what would be your first priorities to address ethics and culture within the Special Operations community?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will consult with the ASD(SOLIC) and Commander, USSOCOM, to obtain their views on the state of ethics and culture in the Special Operations community; I will determine what measures they have thus far taken to address any identified ethics and culture problems or challenges; and I will also confirm that they have a reasonable and appropriate plan for remedying problems and challenges in the near and long terms.

ALLIES AND PARTNERS

111. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, where do you see opportunities to expand and/or integrate programs within DOD to promote international stability and to advance U.S. interests around the globe?

Mr. AUSTIN. I understand that the Department has made significant strides in recent years through aligning security cooperation activities with National Defense Strategy (NDS) objectives and utilizing the full range of available authorities for building partner capacity. If confirmed, I will review the Department's recently issued Guidance for Development of Alliances and Partnerships and assess what additional steps may be necessary to ensure the proper level of integration of DOD efforts to strengthen alliances and attract new partners in line with the new defense strategy.

JOINT WARFIGHTING CONCEPT

112. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, while each of the Services has developed its own operating concept, DOD lacks a completed Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC)

that converges each of the Services from an operational perspective. Why is a JWC important for how the Services operate interdependently, especially in contested environments with demand for artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled technologies that intersect human and machine?

Mr. AUSTIN. The JWC will advance the Joint Force's unity of effort by better integrating the Services' concepts and capabilities. Implementation of the JWC and integrating the strengths of all of our Services across all domains, will force adversaries to face the full range and depth of the Joint Force. For example, the C2 of global all-domain operations utilizing AI enabled technology is beyond the scope of a single Service and requires a joint solution.

113. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, what specific initiatives would you implement to ensure the appropriate development of the JWC—specifically, as it relates to the United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) theater of operations?

Mr. AUSTIN. In order to ensure development of the JWC, the Joint Force needs to enhance capability and capacity for advanced war gaming and emulations led by the Joint Staff and INDOPACOM, make changes in Joint Professional Military Education to emphasize classified work focused on adversaries at the operational level of war, add an annual Large Scale Global Exercise to experiment, test and advance the JWC, and coordinate with allies and partners in design and development of our forces. Additionally, JWC Concept Required Capabilities (i.e., capability gaps), along with INDOPACOM's Integrated Priority List (IPL), must be submitted to the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) for establishment of joint requirements that Services will fulfill.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

114. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, what specific practices would you implement to leverage the talents of our National Guard and Reserve Components to create robust and competitive hiring pipelines for high-skilled professionals relevant to 5G, space, and high-skilled manufacturing?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will assess how the Department can employ the National Guard and Reserves in both unit and individual based approaches. I will assess ways to improve the Department's ability in identifying desired military and civilian skillsets, as well as the need for more flexible application of existing duty statuses to include leveraging the performance of duty from remote locations as we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, I will assess current authorities and resources available to the Department to attract and retain specialized talent.

115. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, what would be your priorities to improve DOD's implementation of public-private talent exchanges?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, my priorities would be to implement the enhancements to DOD's public-private talent exchange programs provided in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2021, including expanding existing programs to private sector entities that are working DOD's modernization priorities. I understand that public-private talent exchanges have been a success in the DOD acquisition Community, and I would make it a priority to expand such programs to different functional communities and DOD organizations.

NUCLEAR POLICY

116. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, do you believe the current program of record is sufficient to support the modernization of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, including delivery systems, weapons, command and control systems, and infrastructure?

Mr. AUSTIN. Nuclear deterrence is the Department's highest priority mission and updating and overhauling our nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority. Our nuclear deterrent has served a vital purpose in U.S. National Security Strategy for the past 70 years and continues to be an essential component of our strategy to preserve peace and stability by deterring aggression against the United States, our allies, and our partners. The nuclear triad has served us well in the past and will do so going forward, and I personally support the triad. And while effective today, U.S. nuclear deterrence remains dependent on aging weapons, delivery systems, infrastructure, and nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) systems originally built during the Cold War. These systems have been extended far beyond their original service lives, and the tipping point, where we must simultaneously overhaul these forces, is now here. If confirmed, I will review, early on, the status of our nuclear modernization and sustainment programs, including those at the National Nuclear Security Administration.

117. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, do you believe that 7 percent of the defense budget is a sufficient amount to spend on what the past five Secretaries of Defense have called the DOD's highest priority defense mission? Please explain your answer.

Mr. AUSTIN. Nuclear deterrence is the highest priority mission of the Department of Defense. It must be modernized to remain credible. If confirmed, providing the necessary resources to recapitalize the nuclear platforms and delivery systems will receive my highest attention.

NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION INFRASTRUCTURE

118. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, will you seek to resource the ongoing National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) infrastructure requirements at the levels needed to complete them on schedule?

Mr. AUSTIN. I understand that much of NNSA's nuclear security enterprise infrastructure is very old, and in particular many facilities related to production of nuclear weapons date back to the early Cold War. This infrastructure, and the NNSA workforce, are at the very heart of our nuclear deterrent. NNSA's infrastructure must be modernized and appropriate resources must be provided to do so. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Energy and the Nuclear Weapons Council to ensure NNSA's infrastructure is modernized.

119. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, what actions would you take to permanently eliminate the NNSA's deferred maintenance backlog?

Mr. AUSTIN. Decades of underinvestment in maintenance and sustainment of NNSA's nuclear infrastructure has resulted in unacceptable fragility in key capabilities. More than 60 percent of NNSA facilities are beyond their 40-year life expectancy and nearly 40 percent are in poor condition. Addressing this problem requires close collaboration between the Department of Defense (DOD) and NNSA and continued advocacy from DOD that our partners in NNSA require robust resources to modernize their infrastructure. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Energy and the Nuclear Weapons Council to ensure NNSA's deferred maintenance challenges are addressed.

GREAT POWER COMPETITION

120. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, what specific, high-return-on-investment activities would you recommend to counter China and Russia in United States Africa Command (AFRICOM)?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will work closely with interagency partners to assess in what ways the Department can contribute to advancing our goals in United States Africa Command. The best action we can take to counter Chinese and Russian malign influence in Africa is to step up our engagement across the continent. This means ensuring robust key leader engagements, partnering with like-minded global partners, and continuing our joint exercises, professional military education (PME), port visits, peacekeeping training, and other security sector assistance programs. These efforts counter violent extremist organizations, improve maritime security, and support health and humanitarian response efforts, such as our shared COVID-19 fight. This means ensuring sufficient low-cost, high-return resourcing investments must be preserved including PME, which is funded by the Department of State. If confirmed, I will prioritize these efforts, and challenge the Department to find ways to increase our military interoperability with certain African partners, while simultaneously demonstrating American values and professionalism—aspects that set us apart from China and Russia.

UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

121. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, if the United States reduced sanctions on Iran, would you anticipate that a portion of that relief would be used to fund terrorist organizations?

Mr. AUSTIN. I would defer to the Intelligence Community for its assessment. It is important that the United States, in concert with its partners and allies, addresses Iran's financial and material support for terrorist and militant groups that destabilizes the region and threatens United States interests.

122. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Austin, do United States troops in Syria help to diminish Russian and Iranian influence in the Middle East?

Mr. AUSTIN. We are in a period of competition with Russia globally, and in particular in the Middle East. While we conduct our Defeat ISIS mission, our presence in Syria does enable us to have a strong relationship with local partners to defend United States interests against Russian and Iranian influence. I believe that our

presence in Syria does help to diminish Russian influence and complicate Russian planning in Syria. Our relationships with local partners and our troop presence serve as an indication to the members of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and our partners in the region of our resolve to defeat terrorism and maintain the forces necessary to defend ourselves while doing so.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOSH HAWLEY

THE THREAT OF A FAIT ACCOMPLI

123. Senator HAWLEY. Mr. Austin, the Pentagon's 2019 Indo-Pacific Strategy Report assessed that "the most stressing potential scenarios will occur along our competitors' peripheries" where "they are likely to enjoy a local military advantage at the onset of conflict." It went on to warn of a fait accompli scenario in which "competitors would seek to employ their capabilities quickly to achieve limited objectives and forestall a response from the United States, and its allies and partners." Do you agree with the Pentagon's assessment in the Indo-Pacific Strategy Report that "DOD initiatives on force employment, crisis response, force and concept development, and collaboration with allies and partners" should be "aimed to help address this critical challenge" of a potential fait accompli scenario involving China?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I agree with this assessment detailed in the Department's 2019 Indo-Pacific Strategy Report.

124. Senator HAWLEY. Mr. Austin, the National Defense Strategy Commission found that "successfully competing in Europe and the Indo-Pacific region, while also managing escalation dynamics, requires positioning substantial capability forward ... to deter and prevent a fait accompli by an agile, opportunistic adversary." Do you agree with the National Defense Strategy Commission's assessment that the United States military should be postured "to deter and prevent a fait accompli by an agile opportunistic adversary"?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I agree with the National Defense Strategy (NDS) Commission's finding. A combat-credible, forward deterrent posture is instrumental to the U.S. military's ability to deter, and if necessary, deny a fait accompli scenario. A new defense strategy will require a comprehensive approach to addressing this challenge, including not only forward positioning and posture of U.S. Forces, but also new warfighting concepts, modernized and high-end ready forces, and capable allies and partners proficient in their warfighting roles in such scenarios.

125. Senator HAWLEY. Mr. Austin, the Taiwan Relations Act (22 U.S.C. 3301 et seq.) establishes the policy of the United States "to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan." Do you agree that the Taiwan Relations Act (22 U.S.C. 3301 et seq.) therefore requires the United States to maintain the ability to defend Taiwan against a Chinese fait accompli operation?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Taiwan Relations Act makes clear that the United States must maintain the capacity to resist any resort to force or forms of coercion that could jeopardize the security of Taiwan. The Taiwan Relations Act also states that the President and Congress will determine appropriate action by the United States in response to actions that threaten Taiwan's security or United States interests. If confirmed, I will ensure that our President has credible options for responding to threats to the security of the people of Taiwan and any related danger to the interests of the United States.

SUPPLY CHAIN SECURITY

126. Senator HAWLEY. Mr. Austin, in 2018, Under Secretary Ellen Lord said at least 45 percent of the printed circuit boards used by the United States military are produced in China. Many of these printed circuit boards, in turn, are used in weapon, information, and other systems that our forces rely on to achieve their missions and come home safely to their families. This creates significant risk for our military. Not only can the Chinese Government work with Chinese manufacturers and assemblers in order to sabotage those printed circuit boards, including through malicious insertion. The Chinese Government can also direct Chinese companies to cut off the Department of Defense's access to these components altogether, with significant implications for U.S. military modernization and operations. Are you concerned by the Department's overreliance on Chinese printed circuit boards?

Mr. AUSTIN. As with all components in DOD systems, the desire is that they are sourced from U.S. suppliers or from our allied and partner nations. However, in some industrial base sectors, our U.S. production capability has eroded. To combat this, DOD will need to work with Congress and inter-agency partners to identify opportunities to reshore capability such as printed circuit board manufacturing.

127. Senator HAWLEY. Mr. Austin, in view of the risks associated with the Department's current overreliance on Chinese printed circuit boards, do you think Department of Defense contractors should disclose if they are using Chinese printed circuit boards inside weapon or other systems that our forces will rely on during combat operations?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will work with acquisition officials within the Department to address these concerns.

128. Senator HAWLEY. Mr. Austin, the Chinese Communist Party poses a clear threat to the economic and national security of the United States. At the same time, there is reason to believe certain companies who either hold or are pursuing contracts with the Department of Defense also maintain a physical presence in China and may employ members of the Chinese Communist Party. Does the Department of Defense have an interest in knowing whether a company employs members of the Chinese Communist Party when the Department makes contracting decisions involving that company?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Department does have an interest in knowing whether our suppliers have employees who are members of the Chinese Communist Party. If confirmed I will work with acquisition officials within the Department to address these concerns.

129. Senator HAWLEY. Mr. Austin, there are reports that some companies doing work for the Department of Defense have previously worked—or may in fact still do work—for the Chinese Government or Chinese state-owned enterprises. Do you find it concerning that the Department of Defense may be doing business with companies who simultaneously work for the Chinese Government or Chinese state-owned enterprises?

Mr. AUSTIN. DOD's industrial base analysis should include visibility into which companies are associated with China's Government or state-owned enterprises. If confirmed I will work with acquisition officials within the Department to address these concerns.

ARMY END STRENGTH

130. Senator HAWLEY. Mr. Austin, do you believe the Army's current authorized end-strength is sufficient to support its current and anticipated role in deterring—or if necessary, defeating—Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will work with Army leaders to ensure Army's end strength and capabilities are sufficient to support the global strategy and demands, to include the Indo-Pacific region.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACK REED

MILITARY LENDING ACT

131. Senator REED. Mr. Austin, by enacting the Military Lending Act (MLA) as part of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007, Congress sent a clear bipartisan message that protecting servicemembers and their families from predatory and high cost lending was of paramount importance to their financial security and military readiness. This law capped the annual interest rates for consumer credit to servicemembers and their dependents at 36 percent while giving DOD the authority to define what loans should be covered. Unfortunately, DOD's 2007 implementing regulations narrowly included only a handful of loans and were full of loopholes that did not sufficiently protect servicemembers. DOD finalized updated MLA rules closing these loopholes and strengthening MLA protections for our servicemembers. Can I have your personal assurance that you will support and protect these updated MLA rules, if and when confirmed?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

OFFICE OF SERVICEMEMBER AFFAIRS AT THE CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION
BUREAU

132. Senator REED. Mr. Austin, as part of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, then Senator Scott Brown of Massachusetts and I created the Office of Servicemember Affairs at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. This Office, during the Obama administration, worked with DOD on strengthening MLA protections. Can I have your personal assurance that you, if and when confirmed, will support and work with the Office of Servicemember Affairs at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

COUNTERTERRORISM POLICY

133. Senator REED. Mr. Austin, in May 2013, President Obama made a significant speech at the National Defense University regarding counterterrorism operations and related legal and policy frameworks for the use of force. According to a White House fact sheet regarding the President's speech, "the President has indicated a preference that the U.S. military should carry out the use of force in active warzones, and beyond." Furthermore, in a background briefing with reporters, a senior Administration official stated "the United States military is the appropriate agency to use force outside of active warzones, given their traditional role and given the transparency they can be associated with actions by the United States military." Do you believe that, absent extraordinary circumstances, the military is the appropriate organization to carry out counterterrorism operations involving the use of force?

Mr. AUSTIN. I do believe the U.S. military is often the most appropriate organization to carry out counterterrorism operations involving the use of force. However, the Department of Defense should not address terrorist threats unilaterally, and all DOD activities must be coordinated within a U.S. Government-wide and international partner-integrated response.

134. Senator REED. Mr. Austin, in your view, how important is public transparency regarding counterterrorism operations and issues related to the use of force?

Mr. AUSTIN. Public transparency regarding U.S. military counterterrorism operations, including those related to the use of force, is vitally important, and will be a core principle of DOD counterterrorism efforts if I am confirmed. I see continued close coordination with Congress on these issues as essential and my team and I would seek to continue to deepen that partnership. Combatant Commands do post timely unclassified press releases when counterterrorism operations are conducted, and if confirmed, I will plan to review the process that balances operational security and public transparency.

135. Senator REED. Mr. Austin, the Obama administration publicly released a redacted version of its Presidential Policy Guidance (PPG) outlining procedures for approving direct action against terrorist targets located outside the United States and areas of active hostilities. Do you believe an appropriately redacted version of successor guidance to the PPG should be publicly released?

Mr. AUSTIN. It is important that the U.S. public understand the general principles and standards guiding the approval of direct action by the United States against terrorist targets and if confirmed I commit to review our current approach to transparency on those principles.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL AND USS 189FRANK E EVANS INCLUSION

136. Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Austin, on June 3, 1969, we lost 74 Vietnam Veterans when the USS *Frank E Evans* (DD 754) was struck by Royal New Zealand Navy aircraft carrier, and immediately sank. Ultimately you, as Secretary of Defense, have the power to make these 74 sailors eligible for inclusion in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The House has passed legislation, and the Senate has strong supporters. The few Senators who would like to inhibit inclusion of the USS *Frank E Evans* crew, utilize the Department of Defense (DOD) and the DOD Personnel Casualty Matters, Policies, and Procedures Instruction (DODI 1300.18), as their reasoning. Do you think those who lost their lives on the USS *Frank E Evans* should be included in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial?

Mr. AUSTIN. The crew members of the USS *Frank E Evans* died in a tragic accident while participating in a routine training exercise outside of the Vietnam Combat Zone. The Department of Defense is responsible for determining criteria for and validating service in a combat zone. Multiple previous Secretaries of Defense have carefully reviewed this matter, and have unanimously concluded that the crew of the USS *Frank E. Evans* does not meet the criteria of a Vietnam War casualty and they are therefore not eligible for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

137. Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Austin, do you think it is appropriate that the Department of Defense is responsible for determining who is eligible for inclusion in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund built The Wall with private funding to honor servicemembers who were casualties of the Vietnam War. The Department of Defense worked the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to establish the criteria and provide the initial list of names for the Memorial. As with all conflicts, it is the Department's responsibility to define and account for all casualties, these policies are established in DOD Instruction 1300.18, "Personnel Casualty Matters, Policies, and Procedures."

138. Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Austin, do you think it is appropriate that within DODI 1300.18 (see below reference) there are two separate sets of criteria for who may be considered a casualty of the Vietnam War and who is deemed a casualty for the purposes of being eligible to have their name included on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall?

Mr. AUSTIN. -6.1.2.3.4.3. Died/wounded while on a combat/combat support mission to/from a defined combat zone -6.5.2.4. Died while participating in, or providing direct support to a combat mission immediately en route to or returning from a target within the defined combat zone.

Yes, this is appropriate because the second provision (6.5.2.4) was developed to clarify combat related casualties that may occur outside a defined combat zone, for example Navy aircraft returning from a combat mission is lost en route to the aircraft carrier. The second provision (6.5.2.4) represents a clarification to the Department's Casualty Procedures, as also reflected in DODI 1300.18, paragraph 6.1.2.2.4.3.

MILITARY COVID-19 READINESS

139. Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Austin, as we consider troop readiness and the health of our military men and women during an ongoing pandemic, how is the Department of Defense protecting personnel awaiting the vaccine, and those who may not be eligible for the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine because of underlying health conditions?

Mr. AUSTIN. I understand that the Department instituted multiple measures to safeguard the health of its people from SARS-CoV-2 without sacrificing its critical missions, including travel restrictions, telework, mask wear, social distancing, screening and testing, and other force health protection measures. If confirmed, I will make the health of the Department's people my top priority, review all measures instituted to protect their health immediately, and direct additional measures, if necessary.

140. Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Austin, there are two ways to assess a body's immune response to a virus-antibodies and T cells. DOD has made antibody testing available to troops, yet studies indicate that 10-30 percent of the population do not produce antibodies. Additionally, there is emerging data to suggest T cells are protective against SARS-CoV-2, even in the absence of antibodies. In order to fully understand the cell mediated immunity against COVID-19 and gain a full view of the natural or vaccinated immunity among our troops, how will DOD make available both antibody and T cell testing to best ensure our fighting force remains ready and protected against COVID-19?

Mr. AUSTIN. I understand the Department continues to test based on clinical indication and in accordance with its screening and surveillance guidance; consistent with CDC and FDA guidance. If confirmed, I will review how the Department is testing its people for SARS-CoV-2 and ensure that the best diagnostic tests are available. It is absolutely critical that a full view of COVID immunity in the military be achieved responsibly, utilizing all safe and available tests. I commit to a review of existing policies and procedures.

PFAS PRIORITIZATION

141. Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Austin, when you and I met last month we had the opportunity to discuss the challenges associated with PFAS [per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances] contamination. As you know, there is ongoing PFAS remediation at more than 600 military installations across the country including at the former Pease Air Force Base in New Hampshire. We have made progress on this issue, but more must be done to ensure the health and well-being of our servicemembers, their families, and others impacted by the contamination.

During the hearing you testified, “The PFAS Task Force stood up by Secretary Esper is ongoing” and you intend to pick up the pace for good solutions for mitigations and military contribution to the solutions while working across the board with partners and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ensure that the military is doing its part.

With that, I would encourage that DOD does more to ensure that State standards are more protective than EPA’s 70 parts per trillion health advisory for drinking water. I would also like you to consider providing blood testing for servicemembers and their families who have served at bases with contamination and ensure that a PFAS free foam is developed and fielded by 2023.

As you think about taking on this new role, please share your thoughts on the PFAS contamination issue and how might DOD take more aggressive action to address this issue?

Mr. AUSTIN. We must take care of our men and women in uniform, their families, and the communities that do so much to support the armed forces. If confirmed, I will energize the pace of the DOD PFAS Task Force to ensure DOD proactively addresses its PFAS releases, and aggressively pursues a PFAS-free firefighting agent. I also plan to increase communications to Congress and the public, as well as work with our federal and State agency partners to remediate drinking water.

 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND

PRESUMPTIONS OF UPGRADE IN CASES OF TRAUMA

142. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, veterans who receive less-than-Honorable discharges are uniquely stigmatized by their military records. They can have difficulty securing jobs and housing and they are frequently barred from receiving VA benefits, including medical care. To make matters worse, the number of less-than-Honorable discharges has increased in recent years. These veterans may apply for a discharge upgrade through either a Board for Correction of Military Records or a Discharge Review Board. With the help of this committee, past Secretaries of Defense have recognized that these adjudicatory bodies have failed to live up to their mandate. The Department has issued guidance memos requiring the Boards to provide special consideration to applicants who have a history of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), or an experience of Military Sexual Trauma. Still, the Boards have refused to meaningfully apply this guidance, resulting in low discharge upgrade rates. Instead, for the past 3 years the Army and the Navy have been litigating class action lawsuits brought by bad paper veterans suffering from PTSD and related conditions. Do you agree that there should be a presumption of upgrade in cases of PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Military Sexual Trauma, and that applicants should have the opportunity for a videoconference hearing if they cannot travel to Washington in person?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Department continues its efforts to ensure veterans are aware of their opportunities to request review of their discharges and other military records. The Military Departments Discharge Review Boards (DRB) and Boards for Correction of Military Records and Naval Records (BCMR/NR) continue to explore ways to seek input from applicants in modern and convenient ways while also affording all applicants an opportunity for timely review. If confirmed, I will review this issue to ensure the Military Departments are applying the appropriate standards under the law and Servicemembers receive just and fair consideration.

143. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, what types of training would you provide to the adjudicatory Boards to ensure the presumption of upgrade in cases of PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Military Sexual Trauma is followed?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to ensure that the Discharge Review Boards (DRBs) and Boards for Correction of Military Records/Naval Records (BCMR/NR) are providing appropriate training to adjudicators on the applicable standards under the law.

144. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, would you perform a comprehensive review of the causes of the increased rate of bad paper discharges across the military and publish a report outlining the steps you are taking to reverse this increase?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will assess whether there is an increase in the rate of bad paper discharges across the military and, if necessary, what the contributing factors may be.

DIVERSITY AND ANTI-RACISM

145. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, as you are likely aware, the military justice and discharge systems are not immune from systemic racism. Black servicemembers are more likely to have an action taken against them in the military justice system than their white peers. Black and Latinx servicemembers are twice as likely as their white counterparts to receive other-than-Honorable discharges, which lead to stigma and closes off access to important benefits. Though these disparities have been well-documented for years, little has been done about it. Will you work to address these discrepancies by empowering legally trained military prosecutors, instead of the commander of the accused, to determine whether to refer a case to court-martial, and to require each Service branch to collect and regularly publish racial and ethnic data regarding military justice involvement and outcomes?

Mr. AUSTIN. I will ensure that we consider every option when addressing this critical issue and will work with our experts in the DOD and our Congressional partners to determine the most effective way forward. This includes leveraging the newly established Defense Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion to understand best practices in this area and to identify actions the Department can take to improve its systems, policies, and programs.

146. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, the military Service Academies play an integral role in developing our Nation's officer corps, but fail to reflect the diversity of the enlisted ranks of our United States as a whole. Women and Black and Hispanic cadets in particular are underrepresented among congressional nominees to the academies. Last year, in the NDAA, Congress required the Department of Defense to publish annual data detailing the demographics of applicants, nominees, and appointees to the academies in aggregate. The academies have this same data disaggregated by Member of Congress, and in the past, they have disclosed it in response to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and lawsuits. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that the Service Academies voluntarily disclose the racial, ethnic, and gender demographics of each Member's nominees, without need for FOIA requests and lawsuits?

Mr. AUSTIN. I agree that this is an important issue and I will work with the Service Academies to release information regarding the demographics of the Members' nominees.

147. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, in the position of Secretary of Defense, to your knowledge, what unique challenges and considerations will you face when ensuring a fair hiring process and workplace environment for women and underrepresented groups?

Mr. AUSTIN. We know barriers to increasing diversity are often complex and not always easily visible. I was heartened by the recently released Diversity and Inclusion Board Report which recommended actions to increase diversity from initial hire through to retention. I commit to continue the good work of the Board to ensure equal opportunity for all who look to join the DOD.

148. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, President-Elect Biden has pledged that, as president, he will "strive for gender parity in senior national security and foreign policy appointments." Are you committed to implementing this pledge?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I am committed to ensuring that all members of our workforce have opportunity regardless of their gender.

149. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, President Trump's DOD recently released a 2017 survey on racial and gender discrimination in the military. It showed 24.4 percent of minority servicemembers experienced discrimination. Yet, only 26 percent reported their experience to the Equal Opportunity program. Only 16 percent of reports led to punishment of the perpetrator and, even more shocking, in 10 percent of the reports, the command punished the reporter. Do you agree that the equal opportunity system has fundamentally failed to guarantee civil rights for servicemembers?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will closely examine this issue to ensure the Department is taking every step possible to prevent and address discrimination, and ensure that we provide all appropriate support to those who experience problematic behaviors. Our equal opportunity programs are critical to demonstrate to our workforce that they are valued, and we must do everything possible to ensure an appropriate work environment for our Total Force.

CIVIL SERVICE POLITICIZATION

150. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, President Trump issued an executive order that would convert positions in the competitive civil service into roles similar to political appointees, without any of the protections from political interference afforded to title V service appointments. I am concerned over the harassment of and retaliation against civil servants, such as Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman, USA at the National Security Council, and Sahar Nowrouzzadeh at the State Department. I am also concerned about the installation of clear political partisans to civil service roles, such as the placement of Michael Ellis to the role of General Counsel of the National Security Agency. The politicization of our civil service has unquestionably damaged our workforce that is critical to our national security. What is your plan to repair the damage done by these executive orders and efforts to politicize the civil service?

Mr. AUSTIN. To recruit and retain the most talented Servicemembers and civilian employees, leaders must foster a workplace which rewards competence and integrity and ensures equal opportunity for all. If confirmed, I will emphasize and strengthen the Department's commitment to merit system principles and will work with senior civilian and military leaders to safeguard against political influence in military and civilian personnel matters.

ISRAEL

151. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, Israel is and will remain a strategic ally and crucial partner for our Defense Department. President Trump's shortsighted regional policies have facilitated a resurgence of Iran's nuclear program while Hezbollah continues to threaten Israel's northern border and build a larger and more sophisticated arsenal of missiles. How will you continue to strengthen our defense partnership with Israel to counter these persistent threats?

Mr. AUSTIN. The United States has a close and enduring relationship with the State of Israel, and Israel's security is very important for our strategic interests in the region. If confirmed, the Department of Defense under my leadership will remain committed to assisting Israel in being able to defend itself and in maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge. In general terms, this means ensuring that Israel has the capability to defend itself against threats from regional adversaries, to include Iran and Hezbollah, by providing Israel with the most advanced technology available to counter these threats and to ensure that Israel's overall suite of military capabilities in the region is unparalleled.

CHINA

152. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, under the Trump administration, China has increased its global power and influence. The President's rash unilateral actions have allowed China to continue to rise while alienating the allies and partners we will need to contain and shape China's negative behaviors. Where can we right size our force and divest to free up assets to bolster our posture in the Pacific?

Mr. AUSTIN. I understand the Department has taken important steps to improve our posture in the Indo-Pacific and focus on the priority of China. If confirmed, I will assess and redouble these efforts and carefully review our posture in the region. Improving our posture in the Pacific also requires working with allies and partners and, if confirmed, I will prioritize strengthening these alliances and partnerships to address our mutual interest of regional stability.

153. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, how will you make our presence more resilient in the face of China's missile capabilities?

Mr. AUSTIN. China's missile capabilities—and its broader military modernization efforts—present growing risks to our forces. If confirmed, I will review efforts to mitigate these risks and strengthen the resiliency of our force posture.

CYBERSECURITY

154. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, last month it came to light that Russia had created a backdoor into the computers of, at least, 250 agencies. For 9 months, and

possibly still, they have been able to monitor computer activity and steal data. This hack came to light, not because of our cyber operations, but because a private company, FireEye, brought the attack to our attention. In your written response you mention elevating cybersecurity and strengthening partnerships with the private sector. I have proposed increasing the role of the National Guard, so cyber security experts could maintain their private sector jobs while also servicing their country. Do you think that is one tool we can use to solve this problem?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I believe cyber security experts from the private sector serving as National Guardsmen could help address the cyber security challenges the Department faces. The leading-edge talent, skills and knowledge these industry experts could bring to the fight could help us defend the Department of Defense networks and information systems. I understand that Reservists are already successfully employed in a similar capacity throughout the Department for cyber security-related missions.

PFAS

155. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, Air National Guard Bases in New York, specifically Stewart and Gabreski, have faced significant water contamination issues, and unfortunately, the Department has still not taken full responsibility for clean up at these sites. Contamination there was caused by DOD's mandated use of firefighting foam containing PFAS chemicals, and its clean-up must be a Federal responsibility. If left unaddressed, the contamination has the potential to significantly harm public health. While we have passed legislation enabling National Guard installations to receive Federal funds to clean up PFAS contamination, States are still receiving pushback and delays from DOD as they attempt to advance formal agreements to fully remediate these sites. What actions do you plan to take in order to ensure this issue is addressed?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will energize the pace of the DOD PFAS Task Force to ensure DOD proactively addresses its PFAS releases. I also plan to increase communications to Congress and the public, as well as work with our federal and State agency partners to remediate drinking water. I will work closely with my EPA counterparts as well.

156. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, in particular how soon will the Office of the Secretary of Defense will authorize the Military Services to conclude cooperative agreements with impacted States to mitigate PFAS contamination, as authorized in section 332 of the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act?

Mr. AUSTIN. DOD and the Military Services are already authorized to enter into or amend existing cooperative agreements with the States to address PFAS, and DOD will quickly evaluate all cooperative agreement requests as authorized in section 332 of the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act.

157. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, can I have your assurances you will work with us set a clear pay way for DOD to fully remediate these sites in New York and across the Nation?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will assure the Department works aggressively to address PFAS at DOD sites in New York and across the nation under the federal cleanup law.

LC-130H AIRCRAFT

158. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, the LC-130H model aircraft flown by the 109th Airlift Wing at Stratton Air National Guard Base are aging and will eventually need to be replaced. The fiscal year 2021 appropriations legislation includes the requirement for a report on the LC-130H mission and the potential need to replace the aircraft to support the Pentagon's Arctic strategy, which is of increasing importance due to climate change and a more emboldened Russia. What is your view on the need to replace these aircraft with the modern J Model of the LC-130?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will assess the capabilities needed for the challenges in the Arctic in the context of a new defense strategy.

NEW START

159. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, as you know the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) is slated to expire just 16 days after Inauguration Day on February 5, 2021, but can be extended by up to 5 years. If the treaty expires with nothing to replace it, there will be no negotiated limits on the United States and Russian nuclear arsenals for the first time in 50 years. The U.S. military has long recognized the benefits of well-constructed arms control treaties like New

START. Do you agree with President-elect Biden that New START should be extended?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

160. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, from a military planning perspective, do you agree that a full 5-year extension of the New START treaty would be preferable to a shorter extension?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed I would seek to implement the President's plan to seek a 5-year extension of New START.

U.S. NUCLEAR POLICY & ARSENAL

161. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, the Trump administration proposed to expand the role and capability of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, including by pursuing additional low-yield nuclear weapons. The cost of this approach is staggering and it is growing. The United States is currently slated to spend at least \$1.5 trillion to sustain and upgrade its nuclear arsenal over the next 20–25 years. In a 2019 candidate survey, President-elect Biden said that the United States “does not need new nuclear weapons” and that his “Administration will work to maintain a strong, credible deterrent while reducing our reliance and excessive expenditure on nuclear weapons.” Do you agree with the President-elect's goal to pursue a nuclear deterrent that is more stabilizing and affordable?

Mr. AUSTIN. The nuclear deterrence mission is one of the Department's highest priority missions, and updating and overhauling our nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority. If confirmed, I plan to request early a briefing on the U.S. nuclear modernization program to ensure that it is being executed in the most cost effective and judicious manner and will make recommendations to President Biden accordingly, in the context of a new defense strategy.

162. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, given the likelihood of flat defense budgets at best in the near-term, if not longer, should the Biden administration evaluate the feasibility of more cost-effective options to sustain a credible nuclear deterrent, and if not, what non-nuclear missions and programs do you believe should pay the bills to keep the nuclear modernization program on track?

Mr. AUSTIN. Maintaining the nuclear deterrent is a cornerstone of the Nation's security. If confirmed, I am committed to a careful examination of the current status of the triad and options to preserve the capability moving forward.

163. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Austin, three former Secretaries of Defense, the former Commander of Strategic Command, the former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and numerous high-ranking military and civilian leaders have openly questioned the need and rationale for the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) program. Many argue that the price tag is too high amid a plethora of other budgetary pressures. Many also say that alternative—and more stabilizing—deterrence options are available at a much lower cost, specifically the prospect of life-extending the current Minuteman III force. According to the Congressional Budget Office, doing this would be significantly cheaper than proceeding as planned with GBSD. With that in mind, can you explain why we are planning to spend \$264 billion on brand-new ICBMs over the next 60 years?

Mr. AUSTIN. Clearly, maintaining a credible nuclear deterrent is critical to our Nation's defense. If confirmed, I will thoroughly study all alternatives to ensure we are on the most cost effective path.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICHARD BLUMENTHAL

TRANSPARENCY IN NATIONAL SECURITY

164. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, will you commit to greater Pentagon transparency about our military operations, adversaries, and budget investments?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes. I believe that public transparency regarding military operations and the civilian leadership's decision making on defense matters is critical to ensuring our defense policies are accountable to the American people.

165. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, will you commit to ensuring the Pentagon holds regular, on-camera briefings for the Pentagon press corps?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

166. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, will you commit to declassifying—and making publicly available—as much national security information as possible without compromising sources and methods?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I would fulfill all of the responsibilities assigned in Executive Order (EO) 13526, “Classified National Security Information,” to classify, safeguard, and declassify national security information. Declassification of information should receive equal attention as the classification of information. As required by EO 13526, information shall be declassified as soon as it no longer meets the standards for classification, which ensures that it remains classified only as long as its unauthorized disclosure could be expected to cause damage to the national security.

167. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, will you commit to following the law and restoring the regular reporting of top-line troop numbers to the American public?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES & CLIMATE CHANGE AS NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT

168. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, would you commit to pursuing the procurement of clean energy technologies to increase the energy efficiency of our defense installations and reduce reliance on the local infrastructure?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will consult with the Department’s subject matter experts in this area and encourage the use of clean technologies to increase energy efficiency where these technologies enhance the energy resilience and mission assurance of DOD installations.

169. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, how will you ensure that the Pentagon plays a leading role in addressing the national security threat of climate change?

Mr. AUSTIN. Climate is a national security challenge we must consider as we take actions. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Department of Defense plays an appropriate role within a whole-of-government response to the impacts of a changing climate.

DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

170. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, how will you ensure that the defense industrial base—and particularly our small suppliers—are healthy?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I would leverage DOD’s existing programs to ensure small firms are able to compete for contracts and receive Defense business. I would work with Congress and within the DOD to improve the predictability of funding to allow smaller firms to more effectively plan for future workload and recapitalization.

171. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, with the reprioritization of U.S. national security interests in a new National Defense Strategy (NDS), are you willing to advocate for the additional funding required to support the Defense Industrial Base and ensure we maintain our critical investment in capabilities that support new concepts of warfare and competition that span the entire spectrum of conflict?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I would support the continued investment in research, development, and production of our major weapon systems and emerging capabilities. I would work with Congress to secure predictable and stable funding to make competing for defense contracts more attractive to industry. If confirmed, I would leverage existing authorities, such as the Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment program, to make key investments to improve the resiliency of the Defense Industrial Base.

172. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, do you view our 5th generation fighter aircraft programs as trade space to fund other priority NDS requirements?

Mr. AUSTIN. As I answered in my confirmation hearing questions, I believe the greatest risk to the Department of Defense’s ability to perform its key missions is presented by the complex anti-access area denial capabilities of competitors such as China and Russia. Fighter modernization must ensure that the services are able to adapt to these challenges. If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff, CAPE, OUSD(R&E) and OUSD(A&S) to review the requirements for 4th, 5th and 6th generation fighters.

173. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, what's your vision for keeping/making the Fighter Force Structure relevant within this context across the Department of Defense?

Mr. AUSTIN. As I answered in my confirmation hearing questions, I believe the greatest risk in the Air Force's ability to perform its key missions is presented by the complex anti-access area denial capabilities of competitors such as China and Russia. Fighter modernization must ensure that the Services are able to adapt to these challenges. If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff, CAPE, OUSD(R&E) and OUSD(A&S) to review the requirements for 4th, 5th and 6th generation fighters

MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT

174. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, how can the Department better target issues with specific garrison installations and deployed units—such as those embarked on Navy ships—known to have higher rates of sexual assault?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department is absolutely focused on efforts to take every step we can to prevent sexual assault and support victims. It is my understanding that over the last several years, the Department has continued to refine its use of data to take more targeted approaches to prevention, with a focus on those local-level installations and units. These issues must also be leadership issues, and we need our commanders at all levels—and at every installation and in every unit, on deployment or at home—to be aware of command climate problems and take appropriate swift action. If confirmed, I will closely examine how we can target our prevention and response efforts as much as possible and ensure we keep our commitment to our Servicemembers.

175. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, if confirmed, what specific steps would you take to ensure that all servicemembers—regardless of Service, rank, or role—experience a culture of respect, safety, and equality?

Mr. AUSTIN. I firmly believe that we have to address culture and leadership. Our commanders are responsible to set the tone in every command, ensure an appropriate climate, and hold everyone appropriately accountable for good order and discipline. My understanding is that the Department has recently taken the initiative to redesign the command climate surveys to get at leading indicators of problematic behaviors, including sexual assault, and is also working to provide commanders better access to this data and tools to address it. I look forward to hearing more about these initiatives aimed at addressing these on-the-ground issues.

CHARACTER OF MILITARY DISCHARGES

176. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, what steps would you take to ensure that mitigating factors such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Military Sexual Trauma are taken into account when servicemembers may receive Other-Than-Honorable discharges?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will review the Department's separation and corrective board policies to ensure these factors continue to be carefully considered by the Military Departments' separation authorities as well as the Military Departments' corrective boards and I will clarify and update Department policies if necessary.

HUMANITARIAN DEMINING

177. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, what role do you anticipate the Department of Defense playing in supporting the reintegration of combatants, including elements formerly funded by the United States Government such as the Afghan Local Police Forces?

Mr. AUSTIN. The integration of former combatants will primarily be the responsibility of the Afghan Government, but the international community can play a supporting role. The State Department would be the lead for any United States efforts to reintegrate Taliban into Afghan society. The most important role for the Department of Defense in this effort would be to continue, with Congressional support, the train-advise-assist mission with the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), and to continue funding the salaries and key support operations of those forces. If a peace settlement among Afghans includes integrating some demobilized Taliban into the ANDSF, the Department of Defense would work with Congress to determine what funding is required. It is possible that some former combatants may integrate into the ANDSF that we help support. When the Afghan Local Police were disbanded in late 2020, most members transitioned to either the Afghan National Police or the Afghan National Army Territorial Force. The rest were given a severance payment. Without an overall security architecture, which currently depends on

U.S. support, this type of reform as well as any other steps to deal with former combatants, will not be possible.

178. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Austin, would the Department consider exploring partnerships with the humanitarian demining sector to employ former combatants and support other goals, such as the clearance of unexploded ordnance from U.S. firing ranges?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will review existing policies and programs for the clearance of unexploded ordnance, including from U.S. firing ranges. Subsequently, I will work with Congress, the Department of State, non-governmental organizations, and partner nations to explore further opportunities to mitigate the adverse effects of unexploded ordnance.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

SHIPYARD MODERNIZATION

179. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, like the three other public shipyards, is in dire need of new infrastructure investments that will better serve the workforce and the Navy's ship repair and maintenance needs. Investments in a submarine dry-dock replacement and a waterfront production facility are long overdue and need to be pulled forward into DOD's 5-year budget plan. Will you work with President-elect Biden to ensure his nominee to serve as Secretary of the Navy supports the critical shipyard investments as outlined in the Navy's Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP)?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will work to gain a deeper understanding of the SIOP plan and will support the President's nominee for Secretary of the Navy who is committed to improving our critical infrastructure.

"SOLAR WINDS" CYBERATTACK

180. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, on January 5, 2021, U.S. intelligence agencies issued a joint statement indicating the recent "Solar Winds" cyberattack affecting multiple departments in the Federal Government was likely orchestrated by Russia. The "Solar Winds" hack is the most significant cyberattack in recent years and executive branch officials are still trying to determine the extent of the breach. The intrusion was only made known to U.S. Government officials when a private cybersecurity company was itself hacked, and alerted the Federal Government. What needs to be done to protect our critical space and cyber capabilities to address the growing threat from Russia and China?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will assess the impact of the "solar winds" cyber attack and determine what steps need to be taken to protect our critical space and cyber capabilities.

181. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, what threats to United States cybersecurity do North Korea and Iran pose?

Mr. AUSTIN. While China and Russia are our pacing threats in cyberspace, North Korea and Iran are investing in formidable cyber capabilities to threaten United States interests. If confirmed, I pledge to be transparent with the American people and this Congress about the threat posed by these and other malign actors in cyberspace.

182. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, how confident are you that U.S. command and control systems remain uncompromised?

Mr. AUSTIN. Defending U.S. command and control systems is one of the Department's highest priorities. Any further details regarding the security of the Department's command and control systems would need to be provided at a higher classification level.

183. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, if confirmed as Secretary of Defense, how will you ensure these systems remain reliable and resilient to future attacks?

Mr. AUSTIN. I will continue to make defending U.S. command and control systems one of my highest priorities, stressing the enforcement of cyber hygiene and accountability. I will ensure the Department focuses its resources to ensuring existing systems remain reliable and resilient to attack through modernized encryption, rigorous assessments and aggressive remediation activities. Furthermore, I will ensure newly acquired systems will have the necessary reliability and resiliency inserted during the acquisition lifecycle.

IMPORTANCE OF DIPLOMACY

184. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, the more we invest in diplomacy and strengthening partnerships around the world, the less we have to spend on our military. Do you share this view that by doing the difficult and essential work of diplomacy around the world, we put less strain on our military to keep us and our allies safe?

Mr. AUSTIN. I believe the work of our partners at the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development are absolutely critical to our national security. The Department of Defense relationship with both organizations is strong. If confirmed, I intend to further strengthen those connections and align DOD efforts in support of civilian agencies' missions abroad. In addition, our network of allies and partners remains a competitive advantage in securing our nation.

RED HILL BULK FUEL STORAGE FACILITY

185. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, the Navy and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) are currently in on-going negotiations with the EPA and the Hawaii Department of Health regarding their plan to improve the Red Hill Fuel Storage Tanks on Oahu in accordance with the Administrative Order on Consent all parties agreed to following a 2014 fuel release from the facility. I'm also committed to ensuring the improvements sufficiently address the public health and environmental concerns of my constituents. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring the Navy and DLA act in good faith regarding their Red Hill improvement plan, including the continued partnership with the University of Hawaii's Applied Research Lab to develop further means to safeguard operation of the Facility?

Mr. AUSTIN. I understand the significance of Red Hill both to U.S. operations in the Indo-Pacific region and the local community on Oahu. However, I am not aware of the details and ongoing negotiations regarding the Red Hill improvement plan. If confirmed, I will ensure I receive a briefing from the Navy and DLA to understand the Department's approach to safe operations at Red Hill.

HOMELAND DEFENSE RADAR—HAWAII

186. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, the 2019 Missile Defense Review identified the Homeland Defense Radar—Hawaii (HDR-H) as a requirement for detecting and discriminating against inbound missile threats from an increasingly capable North Korea. President Trump zeroed out funding for the radar in the fiscal year 2021 budget, but my colleagues and I recognize the critical need for this project in defending Hawaii and we included authorization language and appropriated \$133 million for fiscal year 2021 to keep its development on track. If confirmed, will you commit to being upfront and transparent as the Biden administration undertakes their review of budget priorities in the coming year, especially when it comes to HDR-H?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, if confirmed, we will be upfront and transparent as we review budget priorities.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

187. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, with tensions high in the Strait of Hormuz and the South China Sea, we see on a daily basis the importance of preserving and defending freedom of navigation. I plan to reintroduce a Senate Resolution calling upon the Senate to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which entered into force over 25 years ago—in 1994. Becoming party to the treaty would give the United States a legal right to intervene con international disputes relating to freedom of navigation rights. Do you agree that threats to international freedom of navigation require an international solution?

Mr. AUSTIN. I agree. Global security depends upon a partnership of maritime nations sharing common goals and values. One of the most important of those values is respect for the rule of law. The United States and its partners have long advocated for the freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of disputes, free from threats or coercion.

188. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, in April 2018, Admiral Philip Davidson, USN, Commander of the United States Indo-Pacific Command, stated to this very committee, "our accession to UNCLOS would help our position legally across the globe and would do nothing to limit our military operations in the manner in which we're conducting them now." Do you agree with Admiral Davidson's assessment?

Mr. AUSTIN. I agree that accession to UNCLOS would not limit our military operations. The United States has long treated UNCLOS's provisions related to navigation and overflight as reflective of longstanding and customary international law. Our forces already act in a manner consistent with these rights and freedoms. Re-

ardless of accession to the Law of the Sea Convention, I assess that the United States will continue to advocate for the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes without force or coercion. Whether or not the United States accedes to UNCLOS, if confirmed, I will work with other U.S. Government stakeholders, and our allies and partners, to support the free and open international order and continued access for all lawful uses of the oceans.

189. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, will the Biden administration continue the recent uptick in freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea?

Mr. AUSTIN. The U.S. Freedom of Navigation Program and its FONOPs are key to challenging unlawful maritime claims and preserving the global mobility of United States Forces, including and particularly in the South China Sea. If confirmed, I will carefully review our current operations in the South China Sea to ensure they are sufficient to meet the challenge to United States interests.

190. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, should the Senate move to ratify UNCLOS?

Mr. AUSTIN. I agree. The United States has long treated UNCLOS's provisions related to navigation and overflight as reflective of longstanding and customary international law. Our military already acts in a manner consistent with these rights and freedoms, so accession to the Convention will not impact the manner in which we conduct our operations.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS

191. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, former Secretary James Mattis relied heavily on one of his former military subordinates, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford, a four-star Marine Corps general, for policy implementation to the exclusion of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the civilian side of the Pentagon. As a retired four-star Army infantry officer, if confirmed as Secretary, you will be providing advice alongside the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, another four-star Army infantry officer, General Mark Milley. It is a matter of common knowledge that our experiences can shape our frames of reference. Is there a danger of "group think", having views and perspectives that are "too similar" coming from the President's top two advisors on defense?

Mr. AUSTIN. I would not have accepted this nomination if I believed that to be a legitimate concern. I strongly believe in the value of diverse and inclusive teams, and understand the importance of surrounding myself with capable civilian appointees and career civil servants whose experiences complement, rather than mirror, my own. If confirmed, I will bring to this role a different perspective and different responsibilities than I did to my previous career as a soldier.

I know that the military serves policy objectives that require a broader, deeply civilian vantage point. Our military wants and needs civilian leadership that actively and responsibly leads all aspects of the Defense Department, including exercising oversight over plans, policies, and operations. Without quality civilian guidance, they cannot do their jobs effectively.

192. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, in terms of advising the President, what do you see as your role relative to General Milley?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is required to give his best military advice to the President and to the Secretary. If confirmed as an appointee in the President's cabinet, the scope of my duties would be broader, focusing on strategy and policy, within the President's guidelines. I fully believe that I understand the difference.

My experiences throughout my career imbued me with a deep understanding of what "right" civil-military relations look like. Secretaries of Defense Gates and Panetta demonstrated it each day as they led the Department of Defense. They ensured that senior civilian and military leaders understood their own roles and responsibilities—and one another's as well. They made sure we collaborated, setting an approach and establishing a process that provided forums to tackle tricky issues and to air differing views. They exerted meaningful civilian control like setting defense strategy and policy, overseeing war planning and operations, and ensuring the defense budget made the best use of American taxpayer dollars while safeguarding our national security. They sought to be transparent with Members of Congress, the press, and the public and to productively engage stakeholders on critical issues. They ensured that everyone understood who ultimately must make the hard calls—the Secretary of Defense and the President of the United States. If confirmed, I will model healthy civil-military relations not only because it would be my responsibility, but because it is the very best thing for achieving our national security interests.

NAVY'S 30-YEAR SHIPBUILDING PLAN

193. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, last month, the outgoing Administration finally submitted its annual 30-year Navy shipbuilding plan which proposes a significant increase in the fleet's size, calling for 355 battle force ships in 10 years and nearly 400 ships in 20 years, up from 296 ships today. Furthermore, the plan calls for an additional 143 unmanned vessels by 2045, for a total fleet size of nearly 550 ships in 25 years. I've been a proponent of increasing the fleet's size, but I'm concerned about whether the significant additional spending required to achieve this goal is realistic—the proposed budget offers to pay for the additional ships through extra budgetary account savings we're currently using to fund our troops on the battlefield in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria—and shifts in funds from the other Services. Does the Biden administration intend to resubmit a new 30-year shipbuilding plan in the coming months alongside the President Elect's budget?

Mr. AUSTIN. My understanding is that the 30-year shipbuilding plan is an annual reporting requirement for the Secretary of Defense to include with the defense budget materials, per section 231 of Title 10, United States Code. If confirmed, I will comply with the reporting requirement directed by Congress.

194. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, what is the new Administration's plan to efficiently and effectively increase the size of the Fleet to deter near peer competitors like China and Russia without doing so on the backs of our servicemen and women in harm's way?

Mr. AUSTIN. It is my understanding that the size of the Navy fleet is currently growing as new ships are delivered to the fleet and that the Navy plans to continue this growth in future budgets. Increased and stable funding over recent budget years has also improved the Navy's ability to restore military readiness. To sustain our readiness gains, we must balance force structure growth with the need to train, equip, and modernize the Services. If confirmed, I will review both the Future Naval Force Study and shipbuilding plan in detail and work with the Secretary of the Navy leadership to develop a well calibrated shipbuilding plan that is balanced with readiness requirements.

CONFRONTING DISCRIMINATION, PREJUDICE, AND BIAS WITHIN DOD

195. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, I was pleased to see your historic nomination by President-elect Biden as the presumptive first African American Defense Secretary, a milestone long overdue. Our collective efforts to make the Armed Forces more closely mirror the U.S. population at large, especially in the senior ranks, however, is still a work in progress. Congress passed, over the current President's veto, a host of reforms to combat discrimination, prejudice, and bias in the Armed Forces in the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA. Do you pledge to faithfully carry out the provisions in the recently passed NDAA to eradicate discrimination, prejudice, and bias within the armed services?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

196. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, in light of news reports indicating participation by Active, Retired, Reserve, and former members of the Armed Forces in the deadly Capitol riot, I recently sent a letter with many of my Senate colleagues to the Acting DOD IG urging his office to investigate instances of white supremacist and violent fringe extremist activity within the ranks—and I just received confirmation they were planning to do just that—will you pledge to ensure that IG investigation is thorough, completed in a timely manner, and the results shared with this committee?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes.

197. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, why is diversity of experience and thought an important part of any successful team?

Mr. AUSTIN. My belief is that diversity is not only a moral imperative that reflects who we are as Americans, but very clearly from a military readiness perspective, we are stronger and more capable when we leverage all the expertise, experience, and problem solving capability that exists among our Total Force. As we move forward in one of the most complex national security environments in generations, the ability to adapt quickly, think outside the box, and use all our strengths will make us better on the battlefield. And as a result, we will be able to better achieve our defense mission and live up to the expectations of the Nation we swear an oath to protect.

INDO-PACIFIC AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

198. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, you've spent much of your career overseeing and leading military operations in the Middle East. I look forward to having a close working relationship with you on all defense related issues, but especially those decisions that impact force structure in Hawaii, Guam, Japan, and throughout the Indo-Pacific. As you know, there is strong bipartisan support for sustained investment in the area of responsibility (AOR), and the recently enacted NDAA included \$2.2 billion in authorized funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) in the current fiscal year. It's my sincere hope that if you're confirmed as Secretary, you'll continue to build on the PDI and engage with our allies in the region, especially the Freely Associated States (FAS) like Palau, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands. Will you pledge to consult and work with me and my staff as you round out your senior level team, especially for positions like the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I pledge to consult and work with you and your staff.

TRANSGENDER POLICY

199. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Austin, in 2016, former Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter lifted the prohibition on transgender service in the military. The current Administration did an about face on the issue, announcing in 2019 a highly restrictive policy which the nonpartisan Palm Center characterized as "insidious in operation but designed to be as comprehensive a ban [on transgender service] as possible." In an era of great power competition with China and Russia, and the armed services all struggling to meet recruiting metrics, now is not the time to place unreasonable restrictions on classes of individuals who just want to serve their country. Do you support overturning the current Administration's de facto ban on transgender servicemembers?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes. I support amending the policy to ensure all members who are qualified to serve have the opportunity.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARTIN HEINRICH

PFAS CLEANUP AND REMEDIATION

200. Senator HEINRICH. Mr. Austin, during your testimony I asked for your commitment to take concrete steps to address the presence of PFAS chemicals in drinking and agricultural water. You stated that you would work to find good solutions to "our [DOD's] contribution to this contamination" and went on to state that PFAS "has been used throughout the economy, so I think we're going to have to work across the board ..." with partners to mitigate the impact of PFAS. I'm concerned that these statements fail to recognize strong evidence linking defense activities as the source of PFAS contamination in hard hit communities like Clovis, New Mexico. Can you clarify your views on DOD's responsibility for PFAS contamination in and around Clovis, New Mexico?

Mr. AUSTIN. The health and safety of DOD personnel, their families, and the communities in which we serve, is very important to me. I am committed to DOD proactively addressing its PFAS releases under the federal cleanup law, and will work with the Air Force to energize the pace of cleanup in Clovis, NM.

201. Senator HEINRICH. Mr. Austin, given the strong evidence linking contamination to DOD activities, what concrete steps will you take as secretary to finally do right by our communities?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will energize the pace of the DOD PFAS Task Force to ensure DOD proactively addresses its PFAS releases, and aggressively pursues a PFAS-free firefighting agent. I also plan to increase communications to Congress and the public, as well as work with our Federal and State agency partners to remediate drinking water.

202. Senator HEINRICH. Mr. Austin, you mentioned the need to work with the Environmental Protection Agency to address PFAS contamination. What does that collaborative approach look like and what will it entail?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will work towards national solutions to address PFAS in collaboration with other Federal agencies, such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These interagency efforts should include coordinating on Administration-wide positions concerning proposed PFAS regulations, and moni-

toring and supporting other Federal agency regulatory and scientific research activities.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

203. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, human rights organizations have reported that witnesses and survivors of civilian casualty incidents have had difficulty communicating with the military about potential reports of civilian casualties, and others have noted that the military does not actively seek to interview witnesses or meet with claimants during assessments or investigations. Are you willing to explore ways in which the military can ensure that those who wish to provide information are able to do so?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Department has recently established a website where survivors or other personnel can submit information about allegations of civilian casualties. As we work to complete the DOD Instruction on Civilian Casualty Mitigation and Response we will address these issues and include appropriate guidance to the Department.

204. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, will your staff address this in the forthcoming DOD policy on civilian casualties?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, my understanding is that the Department is nearing completion on a Department of Defense Instruction on Civilian Casualty Mitigation and Response that will address these issues.

205. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, how do you think DOD could improve how it investigates, publicly reports on, and responds to credible reports of civilian harm from journalists, civilians, and non-governmental organizations (NGO)?

Mr. AUSTIN. Currently the Department looks into all allegations of civilian harm, from both NGOs and journalists, and will continue to do so. I understand this will also be addressed in our DOD Instruction on Civilian Casualty Mitigation and Response that is currently being finalized.

206. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, in particular, how can DOD better utilize outside reporting on civilian harm, as well as information from witnesses, survivors, and civil society groups that collect such information?

Mr. AUSTIN. DOD is committed to addressing any allegation of civilian harm that is presented to it, including information from witnesses, survivors, and civil society groups. We have recently established a website where survivors or other personnel can submit information about allegations of civilian casualties. The forthcoming DOD Instruction on Civilian Casualty Mitigation and Response will address collaboration with NGOs, as well as information gathering during assessments of possible civilian casualty incidents. Our policy will establish uniform approaches among Combatant Commands to address these issues.

207. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, do you support making targeted payments (ex gratia, or condolence, payments), based on credible evidence, to civilians for damage to civilian objects, civilian personal injury, or civilian deaths that reasonably result from United States combat operations in Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Libya?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, the Department has done this for many years, and recently published detailed formal guidance for providing ex gratia payments for damage, personal injury, or death that is incident to the use of force. Through collaboration with the State Department, the Department has provided assessments of local culture and prevailing economic conditions to Combatant Commands to support determination of appropriate payment amounts.

208. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, in response to statutory requirements, former Secretary of Defense James Mattis initiated a process for developing Department-wide guidance on preventing, tracking, and responding to civilian harm across the combatant commands. The outcome of this process, a forthcoming DOD Instruction (DOD-I), presents a unique opportunity to rectify shortcomings in current policies and operations and strengthen the U.S. military's commitment to minimize and account for civilian harm. Do you agree that an effective civilian harm mitigation framework should have an explicit objective of minimizing civilian harm, including direct harm resulting from hostilities, as well as direct and indirect harm arising

from damage to civilian property and assets, public services, and critical infrastructure?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Department is currently working on a DOD Instruction on Civilian Casualty Mitigation and Response and agrees that our civilian harm framework should have the objective of minimizing civilian harm, including direct harm resulting from hostilities, as well as direct and indirect harm arising from damage to civilian property and assets, public services, and critical infrastructure. It is my understanding that all of these topics will be addressed in the DODI.

209. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, do you agree that an effective civilian harm mitigation framework should address civilian harm arising from partnered operations and security assistance?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I agree that partnered operations and security assistance should be part of our civilian harm framework and will address this in the upcoming DOD Instruction.

210. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, do you agree that an effective civilian harm mitigation framework should facilitate information exchanges with third parties, including affected citizens, local civil society, non-governmental organizations, and the media?

Mr. AUSTIN. I agree that the Department should work with all available partners to address allegations of civilian harm. This includes the media, NGOs, and affected citizens.

211. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, do you agree that an effective civilian harm mitigation framework should prioritize redress where possible, and condolence payments where redress is not granted, including by establishing an effective claims process, requiring a full acknowledgment of harm and contextually appropriate and culturally sensitive payments for those who are harmed?

Mr. AUSTIN. DOD recently published detailed formal guidance for providing ex gratia payments for damage, personal injury, or death that is incident to the use of force by U.S. Forces. DOD also recently established a website where survivors or other personnel can submit information about allegations of civilian casualties. We are considering further improvements to improve information flow with regard to civilian casualties. It is my understanding that the forthcoming DODI on Civilian Casualty Mitigation and Response will establish uniform standards for addressing these issues.

GUANTANAMO BAY

212. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, do you support President-elect Biden's position that Guantanamo should be closed?

Mr. AUSTIN. I support the President's Policy to close the detention facilities at Guantanamo, Bay Cuba. If confirmed, I would direct my staff to work with other Administration officials and Congress to develop a path forward for the remaining 40 detainees at the facility. Until that time, however, the Department must ensure the continued safe, humane, and legal care and treatment of detainees through Joint Task Force—Guantanamo (JTF—GTMO).

213. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, if you are confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that the Administration acts expeditiously to close it?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I would direct my staff to work with other Administration officials and Congress to develop a path forward for the remaining 40 detainees at the facility with all due dispatch.

214. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, section 1026 of the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA requires DOD to establish a "Chief Medical Officer" at Guantanamo to "oversee the provision of medical care to individuals detained at Guantanamo." The Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA became law on December 20, 2019. Now, more than a year later, there is still no Chief Medical Officer at Guantanamo. If confirmed, will you commit to fulfilling this statutory requirement without any further delay by appointing an appropriate independent medical expert to serve as Chief Medical Officer at Guantanamo?

Mr. AUSTIN. In August 2020, a Navy Captain Medical Corps officer board certified in Critical Care and Anesthesiology was selected to serve as the Chief Medical Officer at Guantanamo Bay in accordance with section 1026 of the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA. He arrived at Guantanamo in October 2020 and reports directly to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring

ing that the statutory requirement continues to be met during my tenure as Secretary of Defense.

ENDING ENDLESS WARS AND WAR POWERS

215. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, for nearly 20 years, successive Administrations have adopted a costly war-based approach to national security and counterterrorism policy with no clear endgame. This strategy has had to a great number of deleterious effects. During his campaign, President-elect Biden pledged to end America's endless wars. Do you agree that we need to end these endless wars?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I believe in ending endless wars in a manner that protects U.S. interests and preserves the gains made after nearly two decades of investment and sacrifice.

RACISM IN THE MILITARY

216. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, a 2019 Military Times survey showed that 36 percent of respondents saw evidence of white supremacy and racist ideologies in the military. Former Defense Secretary Mark Esper addressed this matter by issuing a July 15, 2020, guidance effectively banning white supremacist symbols in the military. This guidance could be improved by explicitly prohibiting public displays of white supremacist symbols from all military bases, installations, ships, and facilities, and from all DOD workplaces and common access areas. This would include commemorations of the Confederacy, as they are racist and undermine national unity, harm military readiness, and affront servicemembers of color who serve the United States. Will you commit to prohibiting the public display of white supremacist symbols, including flags, posters, and the like, on all military bases, installations, ships, facilities, and DOD workspaces and common areas?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Department places the highest emphasis on ensuring that all Department personnel are treated with dignity and respect, in an inclusive environment. In order to promote morale, cohesion, and readiness in the military it is essential that our ranks reflect and are inclusive of the American people that Servicemembers have sworn to protect and defend. If confirmed, I will review current policies and reports to determine what policies need to be put in place to ensure all Servicemembers are allowed to serve with dignity and respect.

217. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA established a commission to develop a plan to remove the names that honor or commemorate the Confederacy from all military assets. The legislation, however, does nothing to abrogate your inherent authority as Secretary of Defense to direct this review and the renaming of these assets independent of the commission. Would you commit to invoking this authority?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will review the Commission's completed report and consult with senior leaders to assess the appropriate next steps.

218. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, the outgoing acting Secretary of Defense has named four individuals to the Commission, all of who were political appointees in the Trump administration. Do you intend to allow these appointees to remain on the commission?

Mr. AUSTIN. I will closely review the membership of this important commission and ensure the appropriate individuals are participating.

219. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, are you willing to review these appointments and replace them if you deem it necessary?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes, I will closely review the membership of this commission and ensure the appropriate individuals are participating.

CLIMATE CHANGE

220. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, climate disruption is a core security vulnerability. In 2015, DOD released a National Security Strategy, which outlined the security risks from climate change and labeled climate change as a threat multiplier. Pursuant to this finding, how do you plan to integrate climate considerations into the national defense strategy and the Quadrennial Defense Review?

Mr. AUSTIN. Climate and environmental security risks pose unique challenges to the U.S. Homeland and DOD missions and operations, in addition to the security of our allies and partners. They must be factored into our strategic planning efforts. If confirmed, I will bring increased focus to the effects of climate change, as a top priority of the Biden Administration. I believe it is imperative that the Department work closely with the Intelligence Community, others in the U.S. interagency, and

our allies and partners to identify and mitigate acute risks that a changing climate poses to the Department's ability to advance its priority defense missions.

221. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, do you acknowledge that climate change represents one of the greatest, if not the greatest, threats to human security?

Mr. AUSTIN. In the near and medium term, environmental security challenges are likely to threaten U.S. national security interests through a combination of acute physical shocks and more gradual disruptions to natural systems, increasing the frequency, scale, and complexity of military missions. Shortages of food, water, and other critical resources may contribute to large-scale instability and migration. Increased instability expands opportunities for extremist groups and strategic rivals to gain influence. With the reemergence of long-term, strategic competition as the central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security, DOD must understand and prepare for the ways environmental security affects competition for influence and access as well as the ways it influences and challenges the capabilities of our partners and allies. Over the long term, these threats to U.S. national security may equal or even exceed those posed by adversarial great powers. This issue is a priority for the Department. Our Resource Competition, Environmental Security, and Stabilization (RECESS) team is currently assessing the security impacts of climate change through a series of exercises.

222. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, DOD's annual domestic procurement budget is the largest in the Federal Government. This money can and should be used to kick start a national clean energy mobilization. What opportunities do you see to leverage DOD's considerable purchasing power to advance clean and resilient energy technologies?

Mr. AUSTIN. The generation and use of energy is of strategic importance to the Department. If confirmed, I will support investments in clean energy technologies where these technologies enhance the resilience of DOD installations and missions.

223. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, section 328 of the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA) contains a requirement that the Secretary of Defense, in his annual budget submission to Congress, shall include "a dedicated budget line item for adaptation to, and mitigation of, effects of extreme weather on military networks, systems, installations, facilities, and other assets and capabilities of the Department of Defense; and an estimate of the anticipated adverse impacts to the readiness of the Department and the financial costs to the Department during the year covered by the budget of the loss of, or damage to, military networks, systems, installations, facilities, and other assets and capabilities of the Department, including loss of or obstructed access to training ranges, as a result of extreme weather events." Do you commit to including this line item in the first budget you submit to Congress?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will examine this complex issue and ensure that the Department complies with the statutory requirement to include a dedicated budget line item in the next budget submission to Congress.

LANDMINES

224. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, 164 countries, representing over 80 percent of the world's states, including all of our NATO allies, have banned the use of landmines. If confirmed, will you commit to reversing current DOD policy and ban the use, production, sale, and transfer of antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions by the U.S. military?

Mr. AUSTIN. The current DOD Landmine policy and the current DOD Cluster Munition policy were arrived at after significant study and consideration and resulted from requests by Combatant Commanders for reviews of the previous landmine and cluster munition policies. It is important for these policies to appropriately balance operational risks and considerations with humanitarian risks and considerations. It would be premature for me to commit to reversing those policies at this time until I have had time to review the policies.

225. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, will you lay out an accelerated timeline for the destruction of stockpiled landmines and cluster munitions, providing concrete plans and mechanisms for public reporting on progress?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will plan to provide the Congress with an update on the plans and timelines for the destruction of those landmines and cluster munitions that are no longer in DOD's operational inventory.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

226. Senator WARREN. Mr. Austin, President-elect Biden has expressed his belief that “the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal should be deterring—and, if necessary, retaliating against—a nuclear attack” against the United States and its allies and that he will “work to put that belief into practice.” He has also said that “it’s hard to envision a plausible scenario in which the first use of nuclear weapons by the United States would be necessary. Or make sense.” Do you agree with the President-elect’s assessment? If not, in what specific scenario or scenarios do you believe the benefits of the first use of nuclear weapons by the United States against another nuclear-armed state would outweigh the costs?

Mr. AUSTIN. In keeping with past practice for incoming Administrations, I anticipate that President Biden will direct the interagency to conduct a thorough set of strategic reviews, including of U.S. nuclear posture and declaratory policy. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense plays an active role in this review.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR GARY PETERS

CLIMATE CHANGE

227. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, how would you position the Department to make early investments in climate change adaptation, mitigation, and resiliency strategies in order to reduce the financial burden on taxpayers and ensure national security preparedness?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will develop comprehensive investment strategies that address extreme weather adaptation, mitigation and resiliency that impacts operations, readiness, installations, equipment, infrastructure, and force development.

MICROELECTRONICS

228. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, what is your plan to develop requirements that mitigate counterfeit microelectronics and reduce risk to microelectronics that have been manufactured by or have a tie to adversaries?

Mr. AUSTIN. DOD should work with its industrial base partners to understand the risks in the microelectronics supply chain, including sourcing from adversarial countries, which increases the risk of counterfeit parts. The Department should continue to develop and implement measures that strengthen secure microelectronics supply chains, ensuring that our DOD systems are reliable and safe.

229. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, do you plan to follow through on the reshoring of our industrial base, specifically with microelectronics?

Mr. AUSTIN. DOD should continue to engage with Congress on this critical issue. The Department requires a holistic microelectronics strategy and roadmap, which includes reshoring of microelectronics capability.

FUTURE WARFARE

230. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, in your view what do you expect to be the most relevant form of warfare in the near future and what changes does the Department need to make to optimize for this most-relevant form of warfare?

Mr. AUSTIN. Joint Doctrine identifies three forms of warfare; conventional, irregular and nuclear. Given the military strength and breadth of capacity our potential adversaries have achieved, the Joint Force must be capable and ready to employ all three forms, across all domains, to achieve our military objectives. At the same time, we must maintain the defense of our Homeland and manage the risk of strategic deterrence failure. Additionally, the Joint Force must not only be effective in armed conflict but also in day-to-day competition to deter and prevent our adversaries from resorting to warfare in the first place.

231. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, as Secretary of Defense, how will you create sustainable and durable processes to ensure long-term success for the Department of Defense in identifying, developing, acquiring, and deploying next-generation technology?

Mr. AUSTIN. As I answered in my confirmation hearing questions, it is my understanding that the Department of Defense Adaptive Acquisition Framework implements the following tenets to ensure long-term success for the Department of Defense in identifying, developing, acquiring, and deploying next-generation technology: (a) Empower program managers (PMs); (b) Simplify acquisition policy; (c)

Employ tailored acquisition approaches; (d) Conduct data driven analysis; (e) Actively manage risk; and (f) Emphasize product support and sustainment. If confirmed, I will work with my staff and the services to ensure that Department policy is fully aligned with these tenets and effectively implements the reforms needed in the defense acquisition system.

232. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, what steps will you take to create a comprehensive approach to developing the necessary workforce, both civilian and uniformed, to operate new technologies?

Mr. AUSTIN. The National Defense Strategy calls for an innovative approach to talent recruitment, development, and retention to achieve the DOD mission. If confirmed, I will work with Congress in continuing to create the necessary authorities and flexibilities to attract and retain the highest quality technical talent, and I will undertake an assessment of the relevant training and education needed for continuous development of the civilian workforce. On the uniform side, I intend to work with the private sector to create opportunities to transfer individuals with unique technical skills into and out of the Department to solve the complex issues facing our Military Services. This exchange of personnel will enable a more rapid integration of the latest technologies throughout DOD.

TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION

233. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, how will you best position the Department of Defense to be able to bridge the “valley of death” between small-scale experimentation and programs of record?

Mr. AUSTIN. As I answered in my confirmation hearing questions, it is my understanding that recent reforms have allowed the Department to engage effectively in rapid prototyping and expand access to new partners in industry. At the same time, the fielding of new capabilities continues to proceed at a slower pace than is required to address the challenges the Department faces and the development of new entrants in the generation of defense capability is suboptimal. Acquisition of services and software remain challenging and implementing sound cybersecurity throughout the acquisition system and the weapon systems it produces is a major need. If confirmed, I will work closely with my staff and the services to continue to improve the defense acquisition system along these fronts and in other areas.

234. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, how will you position the Department to best be able to introduce new technology at scale?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Department needs to be more effective at assessing the potential of emerging technologies and ensuring barriers to entry are low. One of the great challenges we face is recognizing and transitioning opportunistic, emerging technologies that appear outside the technology development phase of an acquisition program. If confirmed, I will work with the Services to improve mechanisms for planned and opportunistic technology transition into DOD systems. I would also foster a culture of appropriate risk-taking in order to accelerate the identification and integration of these emerging technologies.

DIVERSITY

235. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, what will you do to build a force which accurately represents, in every branch and at every rank, the diversity of the Nation it serves?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will ensure we fully commit the Department of Defense to developing and maintaining a Total Force that proudly represents and reflects all our incredible diversity as Americans. That means we have to be comprehensive, not only from recruitment to mentoring and career development, but we also must ensure that our recruitment efforts reach a wide cross section of America. If confirmed, I will look at what’s working, what we might need to adjust, and how we can build sustainable personnel practices that reflect our commitment to diversity for every civilian and every Servicemember at every rank and in every Service.

236. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, what do you see as the main obstacle towards the increase in the number of minorities and women serving as the military’s most senior leaders?

Mr. AUSTIN. DOD needs to improve recruiting and retaining minorities into occupational specialties that lead to senior leadership roles, such as operational specialties where the bulk of our senior leader requirements exist. We must have minority role models leading our operational units visible to a wide range of communities and

work harder to make these opportunities available to all minority Servicemembers, both officer and enlisted.

MICHIGAN

237. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, Exercise Northern Strike, which we host at the National All-Domain Warfighting Center, provides a premier venue for joint service training and an opportunity to work with NATO partners. This exercise is so unique and large scale, more similar to Pacific Pathways or a CTC rotation, that I believe it is more efficient to invest in it. Can you commit that the Department will critically examine the cost-effectiveness, and benefit to the warfighter, of investing in Exercise Northern Strike?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Department regularly reviews the cost-effectiveness of its training programs, including Exercise Northern Strike. If confirmed, I will continue the Department's work to evaluate routinely the returns on our investments to ensure we are optimizing cost and mission effectiveness.

ISRAEL

238. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, Congress recently authorized the creation of the United States-Israel Operations Technology Working Group, that I championed, which is focused on cooperation in research and development in early stage defense technologies. Will you support the implementation of this group and support expanding our cooperation in emerging defense technologies?

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes. We will establish this working group under the existing United States-Israel Defense Acquisition Advisory Group that is co-chaired by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to promote cooperation, including in emerging technologies.

BAD PAPER DISCHARGE

239. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, for the past 3 years the Army and the Navy have been litigating class action lawsuits brought by bad paper veterans suffering from PTSD and related conditions. Do you agree that there should be a presumption of upgrade in cases of PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Military Sexual Trauma?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Department continues its efforts to ensure veterans are aware of their opportunities to request review of their discharges and other military records. If confirmed, I will review this issue to ensure the Military Departments Discharge Review Boards (DRB) and Boards for Correction of Military Records and Naval Records (BCMR/NR) are applying the appropriate standards under the law and Servicemembers receive just and fair consideration.

240. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, would you perform a comprehensive review of the causes of the increased rate of bad paper discharges across the military and publish a report outlining the steps you are taking to reverse this increase?

Mr. AUSTIN. If confirmed, I will assess whether there is an increase in the rate of bad paper discharges across the military and, if necessary, what the contributing factors may be.

SUSTAINMENT AND READINESS

241. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, the National Commission on Military Aviation Safety published a report on December 1, 2020, attributing a lack of parts as a concern for aircraft sustainment and aviation safety. Furthermore, the Comptroller General of the United States has published reports describing how parts shortages can be a concern for sustaining older DOD platforms. As the Department of Defense struggles with diminishing manufacturing sources and material shortage (DMSMS) issues across the industrial base, how is the Department of Defense working to incorporate advanced manufacturing into solving this critical issue and has DOD considered using automated software-based manufacturing to address this readiness concern?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Department is incorporating advanced manufacturing capabilities within the organic industrial complexes and research and engineering labs of the Services. It collaborates routinely through Department-level forums such as the Joint Defense Manufacturing Council and the Joint Additive Manufacturing Working Group to share best practices. Capabilities in use today include technologies such as cold-spray and 3D printers for both plastics and metals which use automated software-based control that assures accuracy, quality and reproducibility.

HUMAN CAPITAL

242. Senator PETERS. Mr. Austin, in 2017, the Army moved to a Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) system, focused on physical training, nutrition and sustaining both the mental and spiritual health of Army soldiers. As the Army continues to adopt this system and appropriately implement the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT), has it considered characterizing Army soldiers as “human weapon systems”—which done by the Air Force has led it to invest in and improve its human capital management practices—to improve the military lifecycle of individual servicemembers and properly acquire and sustain the equipment essential to supporting the creation and maintenance of this weapon system?

Mr. AUSTIN. The Army’s most important weapons system is the soldier. Soldiers must remain the most flexible and lethal force on the battlefield. The Army is investing in soldier lethality on three fronts. First, the Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) system is the Army’s primary investment in soldier readiness and lethality focusing on physical and non-physical performance, reducing injury rates, and increased overall effectiveness. Second, the Army’s soldier lethality cross-functional team has focused on materiel enhancements that soldiers and squads need as the foundation of the decisive force. Third, the Army is committed to soldier intellectual development through world class Professional Military Education, training, and developmental experiences.

[The nomination reference of Mr. Lloyd J. Austin III follows:]

NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT

PN78-1

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
January 20, 2021.

Ordered, That the following nomination be referred to the Committee on Armed Services:

Lloyd James Austin, of Georgia, to be Secretary of Defense.

_____, 2021.
(Date)

Reported by Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____
(Signature)

with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed.

☐ The nominee has agreed to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

[The biographical sketch of Lloyd J. Austin III, which was transmitted to the Committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

SASC Bio

General Lloyd James Austin III

Education:

Webster University, St. Louis MO
June 1988 - June 1989
Master of Arts in Business Management (MA)

Auburn University, Auburn AL
June 1985 – June 1986
Master of Education (ME)

United States Military Academy, West Point NY
July 1971 - June 1975
Bachelor of Science (BS)

Employment Record:

List all jobs held since college including title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment.

Pine Island Capital / Private Company
Member of Pine Island Capital Partners Team
September 2020 - Present

Fidelity Investments / Private Company
Member of the Advisory Committee
November 2020 - December 2020

Raytheon Technologies / Public Company
Member of the Board of Directors
April 2020 - Present

Austin Strategy Group LLC, Great Falls VA / Private Company
Owner and President
January 2019 - Present

Booz Allen Hamilton / Public Company
Member National Security Advisory Board
November 2018 - Present

Employment Record (cont.)

Tenet Healthcare Corporation / Public Company
Member of the Board of Directors
May 2018 – Present

Nucor Corporation / Public Company
Member of the Board of Directors
September 2017 – Present

Carnegie Corporation of New York / Non-Profit
Member of the Board of Trustees
May 2017 - Present

Auburn University / Non-Profit
Member of the Board of Trustees
September 2016 – Present

West Point Association of Graduates
Class of 1951 Leadership Chair for the Study of Leadership
September 2016 – May 2018

Guest Services Inc. / Private Company
Member of the Board of Directors
August 2016 – Present

United Technologies Corporation / Public Company
Member of the Board of Directors
September 2016 – April 2020

United States Central Command, MacDill AFB FL / Department of Defense
Combatant Commander
March 2013 – March 2016

Department of the Army, Washington D.C. / Department of Defense
Vice Chief of Staff
January 2012 – March 2013

United States Forces-Iraq, Baghdad Iraq / Department of Defense
Commander
September 2010 – December 2011

Department of the Army, Washington D.C. / Department of Defense
Director of the Joint Staff
August 2009 – June 2010

XVIII Airborne Corps/Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Fort Bragg N.C. / Department of Defense
Commanding General
December 2006 – April 2009

Employment Record (cont.)

United States Central Command, MacDill AFB FL / Department of Defense
Chief of Staff
September 2005 – November 2006

10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum NY / Department of Defense
Commanding General
September 2003 – August 2005

3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart GA / Baghdad Iraq / Department of Defense
Assistant Division Commander
July 2001 – June 2003

Joint Staff, Washington D.C. / Department of Defense
Chief, Joint Operations Division, J3
July 1999 – July 2001

3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg NC / Department of Defense
Commander
June 1997 – June 1999

U.S. Army War College, Carlisle PA / Department of Defense
Student
August 1996 - June 1997

82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg NC / Department of Defense
G3 Operations
June 1995 – July 1996

2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Fort Bragg NC / Department of Defense
Commander
July 1993 – June 1995

Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization Security, Fort Drum NY / Department of Defense
Director
June 1992 – June 1993

1st Infantry Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum NY / Department of Defense
Executive Officer
June 1991 – June 1992

2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry, Fort Drum NY / Department of Defense
S3 (Operations)/Executive Officer
June 1989 – June 1991

Employment Record (cont.)

United States Military Academy, West Point NY / Department of Defense
Cadet Counselor / Tactical Officer
June 1985 – July 1988

U.S. Recruiting Battalion, Indianapolis IN / Department of Defense
Company Commander
April 1982 – May 1985

U.S. Recruiting Battalion, Indianapolis IN / Department of Defense
Operations Officer
April 1981 – March 1982

1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg NC / Department of Defense
Assistant S-3 (Operations)
January 1981 – April 1981

Combat Support Company, 508th Infantry, Fort Bragg NC / Department of Defense
Commander
October 1979 – January 1981

Infantry Officer Advanced Course, Fort Benning GA / Department of Defense
Student
March 1979 – September 1979

Combat Support Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, 3rd ID, Germany / Department of Defense
Scout Platoon Leader
January 1978 – February 1979

A Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, 3rd ID, Germany / Department of Defense
Rifle Platoon Leader
February 1976 – January 1978

Infantry Officers Basic Course and Ranger School/ Fort Benning GA / Department of Defense
June 1975 - February 1976

Honors and Awards:

Military Awards: five Defense Distinguished Service Medals, three Distinguished Service Medals, Silver Star, two Legions of Merit

Federal Civilian Awards: N/A

Academic Awards: Distinguished Graduate United States Military Academy 2017, Lifetime Achievement Award Auburn University 2012

Other Awards: Secretary of State's Distinguished Service Award 2011, Patriot Award October 2009. Awarded for exceptional service to country. Patriot Foundation, Pinehurst North Carolina

[The Committee on Armed Services requires all individuals nominated from civilian life by the President to positions requiring the advice and consent of the Senate to complete a form that details the biographical, financial, and other information of the nominee. The form executed by Mr. Lloyd J. Austin III in connection with his nomination follows:]

117th CONGRESS, 2020 -- 2021
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED
SERVICES ROOM SR-228
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-6050
(202) 224-3871

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
QUESTIONNAIRE INFORMATION REQUESTED OF
CIVILIAN NOMINEES

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE: Answer all questions and provide all requested information. If more space is needed, attach an additional sheet of paper to the Questionnaire and cite the part of the Questionnaire and the question number (e.g., A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies. Unless otherwise required, an answer of "yes", "no", or "not applicable" is appropriate.

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART A

NOTE: Information furnished in this part of the Questionnaire will be made available in Committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearing, if any, and will be entered in the hearing record, also available to the public.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC

1. **Name (Include any former names you have used):** Lloyd James Austin III
2. **Position to which nominated:** Secretary of Defense
3. **Date of nomination:** intentionally blank
4. **Education (List names of secondary and higher education institution attended, type of school [vocational, technical, trade school, college, university, military college, correspondence, distance, extension, and on-line], dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted):**
 - United States Military Academy, West Point NY
 - July 1971 - June 1975
 - Bachelor of Science (BS)

4. Education (cont.):

- Auburn University, Auburn AL
 - June 1985 – June 1986
 - Master of Education (ME)
- The Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth KS
 - June 1988 – June 1989
 - Master of Arts (MA)

5. Employment record (List all jobs held since college, or in the last 10 years, whichever is less, including the title or description of the job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment. If the employment activity was military duty, show each change of military duty station as a separate period of employment): (listed by most recent starting date)

- Pine Island Capital / Private Company
 - Member of Pine Island Capital Partners Team
 - September 2020 - Present
- Fidelity Investments / Private Company
 - Member of the Advisory Committee
 - November 2020 - December 2020
- Raytheon Technologies / Public Company
 - Member of the Board of Directors
 - April 2020 - Present
- Austin Strategy Group, LLC / Private Company
 - Owner and President
 - January 2019 - Present
- Booz Allen Hamilton / Public Company
 - Member National Security Advisory Board
 - November 2018 - Present
- Tenet Healthcare Corporation/ Public Company
 - Member of the Board of Directors
 - May 2018 – Present
- Nucor Corporation/ Public Company
 - Member of the Board of Directors
 - September 2017 – Present
- Carnegie Corporation of New York / Non-Profit
 - Member of the Board of Trustees
 - May 2017 - Present

5. Employment (cont.)

- Auburn University / Non-Profit
 - o Member of the Board of Trustees
 - o September 2016 – Present
 - West Point Association of Graduates
 - o Class of 1951 Leadership Chair for the Study of Leadership
 - o September 2016 – May 2018
 - Guest Services Inc. / Private Company
 - o Member of the Board of Directors
 - o August 2016 – Present
 - United Technologies Corporation/ Public Company
 - o Member of the Board of Directors
 - o September 2016 – April 2020
 - United States Central Command, MacDill AFB FL / Department of Defense
 - o Combatant Commander
 - o March 2013 – March 2016
 - Department of the Army, Washington D.C. / Department of Defense
 - o Vice Chief of Staff
 - o January 2012 – March 2013
 - United States Forces-Iraq, Baghdad Iraq / Department of Defense
 - o Commander
 - o September 2010 – December 2011
 - Department of the Army, Washington D.C. / Department of Defense
 - o Director of the Joint Staff
 - o August 2009 – June 2010
6. **Government experience (List any advisory, consultative, honorary, and other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed in response to question 5, above):** None

7. Business relationships (List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, and of any educational or other institution):

- Pine Island Capital / Private Company
 - Member of Pine Island Capital Partners Team
 - September 2020 - Present
- Raytheon Technologies / Public Company
 - Member of the Board of Directors
 - April 2020 - Present
- Booz Allen Hamilton / Public Company
 - Member National Security Advisory Board
 - November 2018 - Present
- Tenet Healthcare Corporation / Public Company
 - Member of the Board of Directors
 - May 2018 – Present
- Carnegie Corporation of New York /Non-Profit
 - Member of the Board of Trustees
 - May 2017 – Present
- Nucor Corporation / Public Company
 - Member of the Board of Directors
 - September 2017 – Present
- Auburn University /Non-Profit
 - Member of the Board of Trustees
 - September 2016 – Present
- Guest Services Inc. / Private Company
 - Member of the Board of Directors
 - August 2016 - Present
- Austin Strategy Group, LLC / Private Company
 - Owner and President
 - January 2019 - Present

7. **Memberships (List all memberships and offices that you currently hold, as well as any memberships and offices you have previously held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable and other organizations):**
 - o American Academy of Diplomacy
 - o Council on Foreign Relations
 - o Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity
 - o Rocks, Inc.
 - o Association of the United States Army
 - o National Infantry Association
 - o 555 Parachute Infantry Infantry Regiment Association
8. **Political affiliations and activities:**
 - a. **If you have ever been a candidate for, or have been elected or appointed to a political office, list the name of the office(s); whether you were a candidate/elected/appointed; the year(s) during which you were a candidate, or in which the election was held or the appointment was made; and the term of office (if applicable):** None
 - b. **List all memberships and offices held in, and services rendered to, all political parties or election committees during the last 5 years:** None
 - c. **Itemize all individual political contributions of \$100 or more to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity during the past 5 years. List each individual contribution (not the total amount contributed to the person or entity) over this period:** None

9. **Honors and awards (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements):**
- Five Defense Distinguished Service Medals, three Distinguished Service Medals, Silver Star, two Legions of Merit
 - Patriot Award October 2009. Awarded for exceptional service to country. Patriot Foundation, Pinehurst North Carolina
 - Distinguished Graduate of the United States Military Academy 2017
 - Lifetime Achievement Award Auburn University 2012
 - Secretary of State's Distinguished Service Award 2011
10. **Published writings (List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, or other published materials that you have written or for which you served as co-author or editor, including articles and blogs published on the internet):** To the best of my abilities, I have taken steps to recall any books, articles, reports, and other published materials that I have authored. As is customary, during my tenure as Director of the Joint Staff, and as Commander of Central Command, I reviewed and signed off on several reports and Department of Defense Joint Publications related to the conduct of military operations. Those reports, articles, guides and a publicly available academic paper were published under my name. To the extent that I have been able to locate relevant published materials, I have included a list of those publications here.

The Future Of The Army In Domestic Operations: A Strategy For The 21st Century (USAWC Strategic Research Project) [US Army War College, [1/1/97](#)]

Joint Urban Operations [Joint Publication 3-06, [11/8/09](#)]

"This publication provides joint doctrine for the planning, execution, and assessment of joint operations in an urban environment and explains how they differ from operations undertaken in other environments." [Amazon Description, Joint Publication 3-06, [11/8/09](#)]

Joint Security Operations in Theater [Joint Publication 3-10, [2/3/10](#)]

"This publication provides doctrine for planning and executing operations to protect a JSA outside the homeland. It outlines the JFC's responsibilities and discusses organizational options, and command and control considerations across the range of military operations. It focuses on JSO that are designed to protect bases and LOCs that support joint operations." [Amazon Description, Joint Publication 3-10, [2/3/10](#)]

11. (cont.)

Joint Mobilization Planning [Joint Publication 4-05, [3/22/10](#)] "This publication provides fundamental principles and guidance for the planning and conduct of joint military mobilization and demobilization, as well as some additional methods of force expansion, including use of volunteers and Presidential Reserve Call-up. It also provides the context for joint participation in the planning and programming activities undertaken within the DOD, especially those activities aimed at the reconstitution of military capability to deter any future threat to national security." [Amazon Description, Joint Publication 4-05, [3/22/10](#)]

Joint Fire Support [Joint Publication 3-09, [6/30/10](#)]

"This publication provides fundamental principles and guidance for planning, coordinating, and executing joint fire support across the range of military operations. This publication has been prepared under the direction of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It sets forth joint doctrine to govern the activities and performance of the Armed Forces of the United States in joint operations and provides the doctrinal basis for interagency coordination and for US military involvement in multinational operations. It provides military guidance for the exercise of authority by combatant commanders and other joint force commanders (JFCs) and prescribes joint doctrine for operations, education, and training. It provides military guidance for use by the Armed Forces in preparing their appropriate plans." [Amazon Description, Joint Publication 3-09, [6/30/10](#)]

Improvised Explosive Devices: Unclear Whether Culvert Denial Systems to Protect Troops are Functioning or Were Ever Installed [Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Report No. SP-13-8, [July 2013](#)]

12. **Speeches (Provide the Committee with two copies of any formal speeches you have delivered during the last 5 years—of which you have copies—in which you addressed matters relevant to the position to which you have been nominated).** To the best of my abilities, I have taken steps to recall and report the formal speeches I have delivered in the last five years. If additional materials are identified, those materials will be reported promptly to the Committee. See Attached.

COMMITMENTS IN FURTHERANCE OF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

NOTE: In order to exercise their legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress timely receive testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch. A simple "yes" or "no" response is appropriate.

13. **Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate Committees**

of Congress? Yes

14. Do you agree, 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 timely? Yes
15. Do you agree, if confirmed, to consult with this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Yes
16. Do you agree, if confirmed, to keep this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Yes
17. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this Committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Yes
18. Do you agree, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this Committee? Yes
19. Do you agree, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Yes

[The nominee responded to Parts B-F of the Committee questionnaire. The text of the questionnaire is set forth in the Appendix to this volume. The nominee's answers to Parts B-F are contained in the Committee's executive files.]

SIGNATURE AND DATE

I hereby state that I have read and signed Parts A and B of the foregoing Senate Armed Services Committee Questionnaire, and that the information provided therein and in any document appended thereto, is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, current, accurate, and complete.



This 12th day of January, 2021

[The nomination of Mr. Lloyd J. Austin III was reported to the Senate by Chairman Inhofe on January 21, 2021, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on January 22, 2021.]

