

THE NOMINATION OF GENERAL ANTHONY J.
COTTON, USAF FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE
GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER
OF UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

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This hearing is printed to include all available information
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**THE NOMINATION OF GENERAL ANTHONY J.
COTTON, USAF FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO
THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COM-
MANDER OF UNITED STATES STRATEGIC
COMMAND**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2022

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m., in room G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Jack Reed (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Rosen, Kelly, Inhofe, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Scott, Hawley, and Tuberville.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Good morning. The Committee meets today to consider the nomination of General Anthony Cotton to be the next Commander of U.S. Strategic Command. General Cotton, thank you for your decades of service and willingness to serve in this important position.

I would like to welcome your wife, Marsha, who is with us today. Welcome, Marsha. I would also like to acknowledge your son, Russell, and daughter, Brianna, who I am sure are proudly watching. We are grateful for their continued support of your service. U.S. Strategic Command, or STRATCOM, is the principal command for ensuring our Nation's nuclear deterrent is effective, safe, and reliable.

Today, our nuclear deterrent consists of a triad of ballistic missile submarines, heavy bombers, and land based intercontinental missiles. This triad is the bedrock not only of our national defense, but also the security of our allies and partners who depend on the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

Integral to the triad as a highly secure and multilayered nuclear command, control, and communications, or NC3 system, which connects the President to the nuclear forces. Successfully maintaining this nuclear deterrent is a mission fundamental to our long term strategic competition with China and Russia.

This mission has made especially clear throughout Russia's assault on Ukraine. Russia has conducted out-of-cycle nuclear exercises, issued inflammatory statements about tactical nuclear

strikes in Ukraine, and continues to threaten nuclear power plants in the region. Vladimir Putin's behavior has been reckless to a dangerous degree. China has also made significant changes to its nuclear approach.

Not constrained by the New Start treaty, Beijing has built hundreds of new ballistic missiles and intends to have a stockpile of more than 1,000 warheads by the early 2030. In the past two years, we have also seen China develop missile fields in hardened silos throughout the country.

This development, along with China's development of air delivered weapons and ballistic missile submarines in the South China Sea, fundamentally changes the nature of Beijing's nuclear doctrine. We need to seriously consider that we are entering a new tri-lateral nuclear competition era.

The Cold War was essentially a bilateral rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, and deterrence theory and communication methods were developed based on two competitors. Those rules now must change with the ascendancy of China and its growing nuclear arsenal.

General Cotton, I would like to know how you would address this new deterrence dynamic involving not one, but two near-peer competitors. If confirmed, you will be responsible for not only the health of our triad and the NC3 system, but the 150,000 military personnel who operate them.

STRATCOM's uniformed and civilian workforce is known to have the highest levels of personal reliability and professionalism. It will be your responsibility to support them and their families and ensure our nuclear deterrent can operate effectively around the clock. Supporting your command is the National Nuclear Security Administration, or NNSA, which maintains and develops our nuclear warheads.

The organization has over 40,000 technicians, engineers, and scientists working at three design laboratories, one test site, and four production plants. NNSA will need your support as it experiences its highest workload since the 1980s in managing five major warhead programs while rebuilding nuclear infrastructure.

Finally, the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review has validated the importance of modernizing the triad, the NC3 system, and the supporting infrastructure at NNSA. This is the third historic cycle of modernization since the 1960s. You will be responsible for ensuring the United States can deliver the capabilities needed to effectively deter our adversaries through 2070. General, you will be undertaking enormous responsibilities, if confirmed.

As I said earlier, the United States nuclear deterrent is the bedrock of our national defense. Some have said that this deterrent is never used, but that is a misconception. It is used 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.

You will be responsible for continuing to ensure that the United States and its allies can deter not one but two near-peer nuclear adversaries, something your predecessors did not face. I look forward to hearing how you would prioritize and meet each of these critical responsibilities.

Thank you again for your willingness to serve our Nation, and I look forward to your testimony. Now let me recognize Ranking Member Inhofe.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also want to welcome General Cotton. Thank him for his long service. General Cotton, your predecessor appeared before this Committee several times over the past few years warning of the growing strategic threats that we face as a Nation.

I think we all understand that China's massive military investments are shifting from the balance of power in the Pacific, even as it builds the capacity to extend its reach across the globe. Putin's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and his reckless threats of nuclear escalation remind us of some of the worst days of the Cold War.

We are—effectively resisting China's and Russia's aggression requires that we remain resolute and deal with the world as it is, not as we would prefer it to be, which is sometimes a mistake. I was pleased that the Administration's Nuclear Posture Review declined the first many policy options that would have severely damaged our Nation's deterrence.

However, the Administration's decision to discard planned enhancements to our forces, even as China and Russia grow their arsenals, was disappointing to say the least. Your predecessor, along with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and other senior officers, voiced their objection to these decisions.

On a bipartisan basis, we have taken steps to reverse those voting choices. Moving forward, we need to accelerate the work and the right size of our forces to meet the strategic deterrence requirements of the coming decades.

I trust you will be an advocate for such efforts as the next STRAT Commander. Look forward to your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Inhofe. General Cotton, you are recognized for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL ANTHONY J. COTTON, USAF, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER OF UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND

General COTTON. Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished Members of the Committee. It is truly an honor to appear before you today as a nominee to be the next Commander of U.S. Strategic Command.

I am very grateful to the President, Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their trust and confidence in me for this nomination. I would like to recognize the current Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, Admiral Charles Richard, and his wife, Lisa, for their 40 years of selfless service to this great Nation.

Joining me today is my wife, Marsha. She has been my best friend and biggest champion for over 33 years. A former collegiate athlete and schoolteacher, Marsha has been a remarkable advocate

for the men and women and their families. She is an incredible source of strength and inspiration for me and my family.

Not with us today, but always in our hearts is our son Russell, an intel analyst, and our daughter, Brianna, a recent University of Michigan law school graduate. I am so proud of my children for the path that they have taken to serve our Nation in their own unique ways.

There are two people who are no longer with us but whose absence I feel more strongly on days like today. That is my mother, Amy, and my father, James. My father joined the Army Air Corps in 1942 and fought in the Pacific theater before the establishment of the United States Air Force, and served in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, prior to retiring as the United States Air Force Chief Master Sergeant in 1974.

My mother, all five feet, two inches of her was fierce, full of compassion, and kept her boys, the chief and I, in line. My parents are the foundation of who I am, and I know they are looking down upon Team Cotton with great pride.

Last, I want to thank the men and women of Air Force Global Strike Command and U.S. Strategic Command for their continued professionalism and dedication. Their dedication to this mission is essential in a world where we now face two near-peer competitors.

We must deter the pacing challenge of China and address the acute threats presented by Russia. It is both our conventional and nuclear capabilities, along with a crucial support from our allies and partners, that underpins our strategic deterrence.

Our Nation's nuclear forces continue to be safe, secure, reliable, and effective. As we bring the B-21 Raider, the *Columbia*-class Ballistic Missile Submarine, Sentinel Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Weapon System, and Long Range Standoff Weapon online, we will continue to ensure the credibility of deterrence for decades to come.

Underpinning all of this is our nuclear command, control, and communication systems known as NC3. While the current system is secure and resilient, modernization and sustainment of this capability is just as important as the weapons system platforms themselves. If confirmed, I will use my authorities to ensure that NC3 systems continue to outpace the threat. We will always build in margin. We will always have hedge.

The mission of U.S. Strategic Command is to deter adversaries and employ force to guarantee the security of our Nation and our allies. If confirmed, I will work with relevant agencies across the U.S. Government and within DOD [Department of Defense], collaborate closely with civilian leaders, and directly with my fellow combatant commanders as we monitor the global threats and execute operations in accordance with the National Defense Strategy.

I commit to commanding a resilient Joint Force capable of conducting multi-domain operations focused on deterring aggression, and if necessary, defending this Nation. I look forward to working with Congress and the Members of this Committee to address the strategic challenges of this great Nation.

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, distinguished Members of this Committee, it is an honor to sit before you today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, General. I have a series of questions that are standard for nominees. You may respond appropriately. Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

General COTTON. Yes.

Chairman REED. Have you assumed any duties or take any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

General COTTON. No.

Chairman REED. Exercising our legislative and oversight responsibilities makes it important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive testimony, briefings, reports, records, and other information from the Executive Branch on a timely basis. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify before this Committee when requested?

General COTTON. Chairman, I do.

Chairman REED. Do you agree, when asked before this Committee, to give your personal views, even if your views differ from the Administration?

General COTTON. Chairman, I do.

Chairman REED. Do you agree to provide records, documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner when requested by this Committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate committees of Congress, and to consult with the requester regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such records?

General COTTON. I do.

Chairman REED. Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines established by this Committee for the production of reports, records, and other information, including timely responding to hearing questions for the record?

General COTTON. I will.

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

General COTTON. I will.

Chairman REED. Will those witnesses and briefers be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefing?

General COTTON. They will be.

Chairman REED. Thank you, General. General, the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review recommended a supplemental nuclear system to the triad, a submarine launched cruise missile, or SLCM, and the 2022 NPR did not pursue it. What are your views on the sub—nuclear submarine launched missile?

General COTTON. Chairman, thank you for the question. If confirmed, my job is to be able to present the decision maker, the President of the United States, with a wide variety of options to be able to meet challenges that we have seen to be warranted due to a requirement. In this case, I would want to be able to present the maximum amount—the maximum capabilities that are available.

When it comes to SLCM, I must admit that I would like to be able to do, like my predecessors before, to make an assessment on that. If it meets—if it is able to meet that capability gap that is there, I would like to be able to see that and assess that so I can make my best military assessment on the specific weapon system

itself because I am not familiar with that weapon system on the specifics of what it can do with the capabilities to close the capability gap that we might perceive.

Chairman REED. General, as I noted in my opening statement, we are now facing a three way nuclear race, which alters some of the traditional notions of deterrence based on the bipolar world of the Cold War. If confirmed, do you believe that you will have the sufficient forces and capability to undertake this new and evolving mission?

General COTTON. Chairman, thanks for the question. I would like to answer that two ways. The current force that we have today, we are ready to execute today. What I would say is, if confirmed, and I know this is continually happening today, is we must evaluate what the additional risks are and what the adversary is doing to ensure two things.

First, to evaluate to make sure that the nuclear strategy that we have within Strategic Command can meet the objectives, the national objectives that are presented before us. So the first thing I would do, if confirmed, is to ensure—because sir, the first time since 1945, the first time for us as a Nation, we have two near-peer adversaries.

We have always put together a nuclear defense strategy that has one nuclear power. We are going to have to roll up our sleeves to ensure that we are doing everything we are that we can strategy wise with Strategic Air Command—excuse me, between STRATCOM to ensure that we are meeting the objectives to be able to have and take care of two near peers. First time in history that we have ever seen that.

Chairman REED. Thank you, sir. STRATCOM is the Joint Staff lead for ensuring the Joint Force can successfully defend and prosecute electronic warfare, which is now referred to as electromagnetic spectrum operations or EMSO. Russia has successfully used EMSO in Ukraine, and China has greatly expanded their capabilities. Can you tell us this view—your views on this subject? If confirmed, will you ensure it receives your full attention?

General COTTON. Thank you, Chairman. Absolutely. So if confirmed, it is going to be a front burner item within STRATCOM. You know, I know right now that the Executive, DOD, EMS Superiority Strategic Implementation Plan has been laid out in which the Commander of STRATCOM is going to be the lead and that directs report—the direct report to the Commander of STRATCOM.

That is something that, if confirmed, I want to be able to dive down and do a true assessment of what is going on with EMS. I agree, it has atrophied over the decades, and now with two near peers, we are going to have to understand how to attack that and how to attack it well. So it is absolutely something that I would look into, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much. Senator Inhofe, please.

Senator INHOFE. Tell us, Chairman. I do have three questions. While you have addressed all three of these, it will give us a chance to elaborate a little bit more if that is your desire, General Cotton.

We all know how critical it is to rebuild our Nation's nuclear deterrent, but we are still years away from fielding any new systems.

So in terms of your priorities, how important is it that we accelerate as much of the U.S. nuclear modernization plan as soon as possible?

General COTTON. Senator, thank you for the question. I think about it this way. So if confirmed, I think the challenge of Strategic Command is to ensure that we sustain legacy systems as we transition to the modern—to our modernized systems. That is going to be key for us.

In order to do that, it is going to take the full power of Government to be able to pull that together, especially when we are talking about the central weapons system and the *Columbia* and all of the five that I have under my purview as a current Joint Forces Air Component Commander working for the Commander of STRATCOM.

So being able to do that, sir, I think a couple of the key things are going to be required from us. We are going to need stable, predictable, and adequate, and timely funding. My job, if confirmed as the Commander of STRATCOM, is to ensure that we also have stable requirements.

Because what we are going to see, and what I think is going to be great for us with the new modernized systems, is the fact that we are by design building in a system that we know will last for decades because that is built into the system.

So the modularity that we will see will be able to keep pace with the threats that we will see in the future. What we need to do in the meantime, though, is to sustain the legacy system that still—that is still safe, secure, and effective as we make that transition.

Senator INHOFE. Okay. That is good and I appreciate that very much. The—it has already been mentioned a couple of times talking about the two peer adversaries. This is something that we have not done before. This is new.

Even though you did already address this, you have been asked this question even by the chairman, I would like to give you the opportunity to expand, if you want to, on how we are going to handle this. What is going to be different about two adversaries?

General COTTON. Thank you, Senator. What is different is two near peers that actually act differently. From a doctrines perspective, we understand Russian nuclear theory and nuclear doctrine.

Minimal deterrence was what we thought of when we talked of China as recent as 2018. We have seen the incredible expansiveness of what they are doing with their nuclear force, which does not, in my opinion, reflect minimal deterrence.

They have a bona fide triad now. So we are going to have to understand more deeply the Chinese nuclear strategy.

Senator INHOFE. Okay. All right. I appreciate that. Now, the—while the chairman did talk about this before, I am going to frame the question as my last question a little bit differently, General Cotton.

A number of the senior military officers have testified to their support of continuing the sea launched cruise missile program, including the Chairman and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Commanders of the U.S. Strategic and European Command.

Do you agree with, not—do you agree with these leaders right now and your colleagues that we should keep this program going? I would like to have you give—be as specific as possible, because we all know what the program is. We all expressed ourselves on it. So I would like to have your thoughts on this.

General COTTON. Yes, Senator. So the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, and the current Commander of U.S. Strategic Command absolutely understand where they are on the endorsement of continuing.

Senator INHOFE. That is correct.

General COTTON. From my perspective, I absolutely understand that they are looking at the capability gap to be able to do that. The only thing that is different between them and I is I have yet to do an assessment on the weapons system itself. But absolutely understand where they are on being able to have a capability gap that is filled that they have seen. I have seen that capability gap as well, and I endorse the fact that we need to fill that capability gap.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, General.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Inhofe. Senator Shaheen, please.

Senator SHAHEEN. Good morning. Congratulations, General Cotton, on your nomination. Thank you to you and your family for your long service. I would like to begin by following up a little bit on Senator Inhofe's question about the challenges with modernization, and you talked about a dependable budget process.

You talked about a whole-of-government cooperative effort. What you didn't talk about is the supply chain and the challenges with making sure we have the critical minerals, the other requirements to modernize our nuclear arsenal.

Can you talk a little bit about what you think those challenges are, and how you see the ability to impact that, and what we should be thinking about as a committee?

General COTTON. Thank you, Senator, for the question. Absolutely correct. As we are seeing the modernization programs within the nuclear portfolio, I would venture to say that it is probably being seen across the Department of Defense, but in particular for the nuclear portfolio.

Even as we are seeing the industry partners do the Herculean efforts and work in moving the programs along at a great pace, what we are now finding is the realities of supply chain limitations and supply chain shortfalls. We had a great discussion and a good example—or some components that are U.S. made components with U.S. made subcomponents that are still taking what would be on average, maybe 10 days to source, that are now taking up to 90 days to source.

So by definition, if you look at what we need to do in regards to maintaining a flow and schedule to get our new modernized systems online, you know, if you introduce that into the flow, those delays right there cause me concern.

I think it is going to take everyone to understand how we can close the gap on supply chain management and ensure that we can get the supplies to the industry partners that are trying to modernize this force.

Senator SHAHEEN. Are you comfortable that we have the components that we are going to need being manufactured within the United States, the materials that we need being produced in the United States?

General COTTON. Ma'am, I did. Until we start to see, you know, that kind of eat into to the schedule as being problems with supply chain.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. There is—can you describe how you analyze the difference between strategic deterrence and integrated deterrence, and how you see that affecting your role, if at all, in terms of the mission of STRATCOM?

General COTTON. Yes, ma'am. Thanks for the question. It is integral. Integrated deterrence is a whole-of-government opportunity. In a way I describe that is, it is—I remember growing up and using the dime theory when I was a young lieutenant, but it is using all instruments of power within the Government, the United States, to afford us a deterrence factor that makes it, so we never have to get to the day where I have to execute the mission, if confirmed, from U.S. Strategic Command.

Strategic deterrence to me composes more than just nuclear deterrence. Strategic deterrence to me has a conventional and a nuclear component to it. It is the backstop, in my opinion, to ensure that we can deter forces when called upon.

Senator SHAHEEN. So does the focus on integrated deterrence change the role that you would have, if confirmed, as the head of STRATCOM?

General COTTON. Ma'am, I don't believe so, because I think strategic deterrence is an integral part of the overarching integrated deterrence that we all speak of.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. One of the—you know, as someone who remembers the Cold War very vividly and the focus on—the concern about nuclear annihilation and the ability to destroy the world that way, and there was a lot of attention to that that has dissipated over the years with some of the arms control agreements, and but I think as we look at the war in Ukraine and some of Vladimir Putin's statements, there is a renewed concern about what the use of nuclear weapons would mean.

Are there ways in which you think our Strategic Command, our nuclear triad are helping to constrain what Vladimir Putin does now in this war in Ukraine?

General COTTON. Senator, thanks for the question. I absolutely believe that our nuclear deterrent force held. We did not see Russia do anything with our native—or our NATO partners. The rhetoric may have—we may have heard the rhetoric, but I think at the end of the day, Russia and China both understand that we have a strong, resilient nuclear force that is offering deterrence to ourselves and extended deterrence to our allies.

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

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Shahee. Senator Fischer, please.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, General, for being here today. Thank you for your willingness to continue your service to this country. I would like to welcome your family as well.

Madam, it is nice to see you here, and I know the sacrifices that you and your family make on behalf of this country as well. Thank you. General Cotton, a lot of times in this Committee and on the subcommittee of strategic forces, our main focus is on modernization of our triad. We also try to gain a fuller understanding of the future needs that our military must have to provide for National Security.

We talk about things like SLCM and the need that Commanders such as yourself will have to have to provide options to the President when or if you are ever in that position. The more options you can represent, the better for the security of this country, the better for the people of this country.

But also under the duties and responsibilities of the STRATCOM Combatant Commander, we need to look at the importance of NC3. We have to look at the NNSA's supporting infrastructure as well.

So, General, I think that when we talk about nuclear modernization and we have that focus on the triad, on the weapons systems, the warheads, we shouldn't forget, we should not forget about NC3, the architecture, as well as the scientific and production infrastructure of NNSA.

Can you talk about how important these elements are to the deterrent and the modernization challenge that we are seeing in these areas as well?

General COTTON. Senator, I would love to. You know, I will start with NC3. I know there are Members of the Committee that say it is the fourth of the triad, right. It is the quad. I have heard folks say that. I call it the tapestry. In my opening statement, you heard me discuss and talk about, it is just as important as the platforms that we are talking about modernizing, and that is absolutely true.

The good news is it is still a—it is a resilient system today. What I like, having over 36 years in this business, is the conversations that people like yourself, and others also see it as just as important as the—as a weapon systems that we often talk about. If confirmed, I would use my authorities.

As everyone's aware, the NEC or the NC3 enterprise center that is located within Strategic Command and the Commander Strategic Command having kind of oversight, delegated oversight authorities to be able to kind of make sure that we as a Department are looking to ensure that we are modernizing with Next Gen technologies.

I call it NC2 over assured comms to ensure that we have the state of the art NC3 systems that we need for not only today, not only mid-term, but the future. That is going to be absolutely critical for us, because I guarantee you that I want to ensure that we always outpace our adversaries, who are also paying attention to our NC3 systems.

Senator FISCHER. STRATCOM also has significant responsibilities for the electromagnetic spectrum operations. Can you describe some of the challenges in this mission area, and what STRATCOM is doing to help rebuild the force structure and the capabilities that we need?

General COTTON. Yes, ma'am. So from my vantage point as the Joint Forces Air Component Commander, I can only give my vantage of what I have in the Air Force side of the house. If confirmed,

I would like to make an assessment on the entire portfolio. But from our vantage point, I think we are a little behind.

I don't think—I know we are behind. But the good news is, I know that we are working to try to close the gap on us not paying attention to EMS for decades. So if confirmed, that would be one of the things that would be on the plate that I would absolutely want to assess and be the greatest advocate that I could be as the Commander of STRATCOM in ensuring that we have the—not the not pace our adversaries but lead our adversaries in that domain.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. I was going to ask you about also, as critics portray our nuclear deterrence as a relic of the Cold War, but I will send that to you in a written question. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator Hirono, please.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, General Cotton and Mrs. Cotton. As part of my responsibilities on this Committee to ensure the fitness of nominees for appointment to senior positions within the Administration, I ask the following two initial questions of all nominees to all of the committees on which I serve.

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?

General COTTON. Senator, no.

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

General COTTON. No, ma'am.

Senator HIRONO. General, you have been asked a number of questions about SLCM, and while some military leaders, including Chairman Millie, have expressed their support for SLCM, and several DOD officials, including Secretary Austin, have expressed their opposition to the project, I share the concerns expressed by Secretary Austin that the development of such a low yield or tactical nuclear cruise missile is unnecessary and could lead to a dangerous new nuclear arms race.

The United States should be a leader in international efforts to reduce nuclear stockpiles and prevent nuclear proliferation, while still ensuring we maintain cutting edge capabilities to protect our National Security. I know that you testified that you will make your own assessment as to SLCM.

I do want to ask you though, do you agree that the United States has a role to play in preventing a new nuclear arms race? If so, if confirmed, will you work with the Department of State to support the strengthening of diplomatic efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation?

General COTTON. Senator, thank you for the question. I think that that weaves into what we would call integrated deterrence, right. So as we talk about integrated deterrence, I want to take our instruments of power to ensure that we can deter. So in regards to the question that you asked, my best military advice would always be to be able to present the Commander in Chief with a variety of options and capabilities.

So that is where I would be, if confirmed as the Commander of U.S. STRATCOM, is to be able to offer as much capability and options to the Commander in Chief. But I do understand the question

that you asked in regard to the Department of State, and the answer is yes, as far as integrated deterrence, I think it is key to that.

Senator HIRONO. Well, I think integrated deterrence means that we have a role to play, I would say a leading role to play, in preventing a new nuclear arms race. Would you agree with that?

General COTTON. I do.

Senator HIRONO. So given the importance of nonproliferation, are there other weapons or tactics that can accomplish the same strategic objectives as the Command without creating new nuclear weapons?

General COTTON. Ma'am, if confirmed, that is exactly what I meant by making the assessment to understand what would be the gap filler in the capability.

Senator HIRONO. As we prepare to revamp the nuclear triad or modernize the triad, wouldn't our efforts be better utilized focusing on that important mission rather than diverting resources and attention to SLCM?

General COTTON. Ma'am, you know, I appreciate the committee and what they have done for the overarching modernization of the nuclear portfolio writ large. Once again, I think if confirmed, I still would like to be able to assess and analyze how do you broaden that portfolio to provide more options for the President of the United States.

Senator HIRONO. I think one of the concerns about the SLCM is that it is going to be a highly expensive proposition, whereas we are very clear on the need to revamp the triad and modernize. So the going on the higher class ballistic missile submarine, originally said to be in service for 30 years, will be extended by the Navy out to 42 years.

These submarines will begin to retire from the fleet as the *Columbia*-class comes online to replace them in the late 2020s. The warheads used on the submarines have also undergone life extension programs of their own, in some cases adding an estimate of 30 years to their service life.

What concerns you have with service life extensions as we bridge the gap between aging and new technologies?

General COTTON. Ma'am, thank you for the question. So in regards, with our incredible partners at NNSA who are doing this work for us, I think the question is we need to kind of see what aging you really see from the asset, and also does a life extension, you know, solve the problem to get the effects that you want from that asset.

So if confirmed, I think that is part of what I would assess as being a member of the Nuclear Weapons Council as well, to be able to get an assessment to see, okay, is it about re-use or is it about new, and further. So that is something that I would have to make an assessment on, if confirmed.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator Cotton, please.

Senator COTTON. General Cotton, welcome and congratulations on your nominations and continued service. You know, we hear the term arms race a lot, especially in the nuclear context. Last time,

I guess, we had a major arms race in which we actually contested. The race was in the 1980s.

There aren't many Senators around who were there then. Pat Leahy and Chuck Grassley, maybe. I bet they took different views on it. I know what view Joe Biden took on it. He continued to criticize Ronald Reagan for an arms race that was going to destabilize the world, lead to a nuclear war.

Of course, it led to nothing but victory in the Cold War without even firing a shot. Do we get to decide whether there is an arms race or not, General Cotton, or does the enemy get a vote on that?

General COTTON. Thank you for the question, Senator. I would answer it this way, and it still goes back to the options and capabilities that we should be able to provide to the Commander in Chief. So from—my best military advice is to provide the capability and options for the Commander in Chief, and I would like to be able to provide the most capable options that I can in this regard.

Senator COTTON. Yes, and that is why I said the last contested arms race we faced was in the 1980s during the Reagan buildup, because we have been in an arms race with China for the last 30 years, and fortunately we haven't been significantly contesting it and therefore China has been winning it. In the end, whether we enter an arms race is not really up to us. What is up to us is whether we win it or we lose it.

If you ask me, it is much cheaper to win an arms race than it is to lose a war. It goes especially for nuclear weapons. General Cotton, I want to read to you a short excerpt from Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain speech, also known as The Sinews of Strength—A Sinews of Peace speech.

Less than, or barely six months after VJ Day in Fulton, Missouri, Churchill says, from what I have seen of our Russian friends and allies during the war, I am convinced there is nothing they admire so much as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than for weakness, especially military weakness.

Do you agree with Sir Winston that Russians have less—there is nothing for which they have less respect than weakness, especially military weakness?

General COTTON. Senator, I agree.

Senator COTTON. Do you think that is true of the Chinese as well?

General COTTON. I do.

Senator COTTON. Do you think it is true of the Iranians?

General COTTON. I think of all of our adversaries.

Senator COTTON. Okay. Yes, I thought so too. He continued then to say, for that reason, the old doctrine of a balance of power is unsound. We cannot afford it, if we can help it, to work on narrow margins, offering temptations to a trial of strength. Do you agree with Sir Winston that we should not offer temptations to a trial of strength to our adversaries by operating on narrow margins?

General COTTON. Senator, I think that we always should—we always should operate from a power of strength.

Senator COTTON. Those margins would narrow significantly, given China's nuclear buildup, if China and Russia became de facto or even de jure allies, correct?

General COTTON. Two near peer allies as opposed—or adversaries, as opposed to one.

Senator COTTON. Okay. There has been a lot of talk over the last year that a major ground war in Europe between two nation states was unthinkable. Even after Russia invaded Ukraine, such a war was unthinkable.

Obviously, Vladimir Putin thought it was quite thinkable. Do you believe that a nuclear war is unthinkable? Not in terms of the consequences it would have for our Nation and for the world, but for the fact of whether it might happen. Is a nuclear war unthinkable?

General COTTON. Senator, I think if confirmed, the role that I would play as Commander is to make sure that those 150,000 men and women that are supporting Strategic Air Command, every—I keep saying Strategic Air Command, forgive me—and Strategic Command are prepared to do what some folks might think is the unthinkable.

Senator COTTON. I think that is right. You have an unusual and weighty job, and that I think it is your responsibility almost every day to think what most people believe is unthinkable and think about what a nuclear war would look like and how it would be fought, and therefore the best way to do what we all want, which is to deter it from happening in the first place. So, thank you, General Cotton. Best wishes for you in your new role.

General COTTON. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator King, please.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Cotton, welcome. I am sure you were briefed before this hearing that the Russians again—let me try it again. I am sure you were briefed that the chairman would ask you a series of routine questions at the beginning and you went through and answered them properly.

I just want to emphasize one of those questions. Do you agree, when asked before this Committee, to give your personal views, even if your views differ from the Administration? That is a very important question, because we need to know what your best military advice is, not colored by the views of the Administration, the President. This is—I just want to emphasize how important this question is.

You answered it properly, but I just want to have it in the back of your head in the future, and it is going to be difficult. It is not easy to say something that may be unacceptable to some other part of the Pentagon or the Administration. In looking over my notes as I make questions, I realize that all of my questions involve changes in the strategic posture.

You have mentioned several times we have gone from a bipolar world to a multipolar world in terms of our adversaries. That is a strategic change, but there are others. Just to run down a quick list, electromagnetic spectrum and electronic warfare.

You have you have touched upon, I realize there is classified information here, but I hope that you will commit to holding serious exercises on electronic warfare and notify us of how we are doing. Because this is a new strategic challenge that I am not sure we are adequately accounted for yet.

General COTTON. So Senator, for your first question, absolutely, yes, my best military advice presented to the Committee. For your second, is another absolutely, yes. We are going to have to flesh out through exercises, as you mentioned, to ensure we can find any blind spots and shortfalls and make corrections as warranted and as required. So I wholeheartedly agree with you.

Senator KING. Another area of strategic change has happened in the last four or five years, and that is hypersonics. We thought of strategic forces as nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence.

Hypersonics are a new threat that are—is a strategic threat, particularly, for example, the Chinese putting a glide vehicle, hypersonic glide vehicle in orbit, which radically changes things like how much time we might have to react to an attack. Do you view hypersonics as a serious strategic challenge?

General COTTON. Senator, I do, and I see it as a warning challenge. I think as far as when we have a conversation, if confirmed, I think my fellow combatant commanders, we will have to have a discussion and understand how to give—kind of relook missile defense, relook missile warning, understand what a sensor layer looks like that can achieve those effects to give time, because I need to give decision space to the decision maker.

Senator KING. Well, I think it is safe to say that the bullet on bullet theory of missile defense is out the window when you are talking about hypersonics. Another area is cyber. You have talked about it.

You have indicated how important it is, particularly with NC3. Will you commit to red teaming and pen testing and hackers for hire to test the security of the systems that you are developing?

I don't think you really know how secure you are until somebody attacks you. I hope it is—I want it to be a friendly attack.

General COTTON. Senator, if confirmed, that would be one of the first directions I would give to the NEC.

Senator KING. Thank you. Final point. Again, a new strategic challenge or a different strategic challenge, and I don't expect really an answer, but perhaps you could consider this for the record, that is non-state actors with nuclear weapons.

The deterrent theory doesn't work if you don't have a capital city and if you don't care about dying. We have a proliferation of nuclear weapons, and we have rogue states developing nuclear weapons and nuclear materials.

The chances of those materials falling into the hands of a terrorist organization, it seems to me, are increasing gradually but steadily. I hope you will give this some thought because it is a major strategic challenge that doesn't fit within the ambit of what has been our historic deterrence strategy for dealing with nuclear threats.

General COTTON. Senator, you are absolutely right, and I will get back with you, if confirmed, and we can have further discussions along that.

Senator KING. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King. Senator Rounds, please.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, General Cotton. Thank you to you and to your family for your years

of service to our country, and your continued service in the future. General Cotton, I share the perspective that the nuclear deterrent is the foundation of our National Security.

In the past, I have asked other leaders in the nuclear enterprise to give their views, in plain language, on the importance of our nuclear triad so that the American—you know, our American public, who really don't think about this on a regular basis, can understand why we have hundreds, if not thousands, of nuclear warheads.

Can you explain it in such a fashion as to why it is so important to our National Security that we not only maintain, but accelerate the investment in the modernization of this nuclear triad?

General COTTON. Senator Rounds, thank you for the question. I think if we were to do a perspective on talking about the three legs of the triad in particular, and how it is the backstop and underpins, I think if I was at a town hall meeting, how I would describe that to a local town hall is, think about the bedrock of a feature and what holds the rest of your foundation up.

You know, when we have—when we are building a home, you know, you want to make sure you have a steady, you know, steady property to put the foundation on. For every operational plan that the Department of Defense has, it relies on the fact that strategic deterrence is going to hold to allow those other missions to accomplish. If that does not happen, that is when you see that deterrence fails.

The way that we accomplish that is through our triad of having bombers who are recordable if warranted, having submarines that can be used, or having ICBMs that are readily available for the decision maker to do that.

Our adversaries understand that and know that we can hold them at bay. That is that bedrock and foundation that is so critically important for us and this Nation.

Senator ROUNDS. I think it is sometimes we think about the fact that we have great conventional forces, but the reason why those conventional forces can be effective is because everybody knows that in the back, the hammer are the nuclear forces, which have been upgraded. That is what I want to talk about next.

With regard to our nuclear command and control systems, they have got to be upgraded. We are in the process of doing that now. What do you see as one of the biggest challenges or what do you see as the biggest challenges regarding the upgrading of our current command and control structure?

General COTTON. Thanks for the question. As I said in my opening comments, in my opening statement, I articulated that it is a resilient system today. I think moving forward, I see it as a continuance. You will never close the book on a modernization of a comm node. So as I see it, that—I don't know if I see the challenge, but I—but what we are going to be able to have to do is, I say move to a system using 21st century technologies that allows us to have what I called NC3 over shared comms.

So being able to make it so I can—we can message and get data to the warfighters in any situation. So I think that challenge is being able to link the legacy systems with the modernized systems.

But I am here to say that I am quite pleased in the work that is being done with NC3 Next Gen, if you will. So the team is really, really getting after it and I am pretty impressed on the way forward on being able to close that challenge.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, General, and one last item that I wanted to visit with today, and that is, if confirmed, you will be the lead for joint electromagnetic spectrum operations.

The growth of 5G technologies continues to add additional requests for larger parts of the band, some of which are needed for National Security. Now, recognizing the unclassified setting of this hearing, can you explain to this COmmittee, and perhaps to other folks out there that are wondering why it isn't being made more readily available, but the Pentagon and the Department of Defense clearly is recognizing the need to protect certain areas of the spectrum for National Security purposes.

Can you share a little bit about the real necessity of working in a consultative way, really, in a cooperative way with the FCC and the NTIA in maintaining certain portions of the spectrum for National Security purposes and how absolutely critical it is.

General COTTON. Senator, it is incredibly critical that we maintain and understand, and to be frank, have others understand the necessity to protect certain bands. If confirmed, I would want to collaborate with the FCC and others so we can—maybe we need to message better for folks to understand exactly what we are talking about here on the necessity and criticality of making sure that we can protect those bands that you mentioned.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General COTTON. Thank you, Senator Rounds. Senator Kaine, please.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and General Cotton, great to see you. I enjoyed our visit yesterday, and I think this has been touched on by earlier Senators and their questions, but I really was intrigued by the discussion we were having about this multipolar nature of the threat.

So as you look at the triad, we have to always recapitalize and have it be strong, but we have thought of the triad, both in terms of our investment, but even in terms of our theory of deterrence or our theory about what the triad means to our defense. We sort of thought about it as a triad with respect to one nuclear competitor.

Okay, now we have two nuclear competitors, and evidence demonstrates that they are increasingly working together. The United States policy for decades kind of said that China and Russia would never get too close because of a history of enmity and different cultures and things like that. But they are getting closer and closer every day, and often they are doing things not only just the two of them, but with Iran, North Korea, sometimes with Turkey.

So how should, you be confirmed, and I am confident you will be, how will you approach this analysis of the threat, that is not simply an analysis of the capacity of individual adversaries, but the fact that these adversaries are cooperating and that previous deterrence doctrines are really built more around a bipolar world rather than multiple competitors?

General COTTON. Senator Kaine, thank you for the for the question. You are absolutely right, and we touched upon it earlier. I think what is key—and it is, you know, as we discussed, it is multiple approaches, too, because one, if confirmed—and I know the work is being currently done within STRATCOM because as a JFACC Commander to STRATCOM offering input to that today.

But if confirmed, that assessment has to continue, because when we talk about—I mean, as you said, as we talk about nuclear doctrine, nuclear doctrine is with one near-peer adversary. We are—and what that will drive is then that will drive on how do we meet national objectives based on the strategic doctrine within the confines of Strategic Command.

Then we have to then, from my best military advice, understand what force shaping looks like in regards to how do you meet the objectives that would be given to us from the Commander in Chief.

That is work that has to be done, and I know it is being done today. But if confirmed, that is one of the first things that we will dive into where I can get a better understanding, to your point, of what does it look like when you have two near-peer adversaries that act differently, might work—that might work together, might not work together, but we still need to understand, you know, how do you execute against that threat.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, General. Another thing we talked about yesterday was bomber task force missions. There was just a completion of one in SOUTHCOM with Panamanian and Ecuadorian partners. We have also done bomber task force missions with European allies. These are to show unity, to test interoperability. Talk about what those missions produce for our defense capacity.

General COTTON. Thank you for that. So bomber task force, our bomber task forces that we currently do on behalf of our—on behalf of COCOMS, of which I am the lead as Air Force Global Strike Commander to present those forces to COCOMS through STRATCOM, it has been incredible because what it shows. It shows why we are the most powerful military on the face of the earth, and that is because we have allies and partners.

What it shows is using conventional forces, what strategic deterrence is all about as well. There is nothing more gratifying than seeing an ally or a partner come up on a wing of a B-52 that is doing an integrated mission over a COCOM area, and seeing the PA sentiment, if you will, Senator, come back from the adversaries on how that mission went.

So it is a win-win for ourselves, as well as our allies and partners that participate in those missions that we are doing constantly across the globe.

Senator KAINE. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator Ernst, please.

Senator ERNST. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, General Cotton, for being here today, as well as Marsha. Thank you very much for joining us. I enjoyed visiting with you in the office. We covered a lot of really great topics important to the defense of our Nation, and just a few questions here in this Committee.

The 2018 National Defense Strategy Commission had determined that the United States might struggle to win or perhaps even lose a war with China over Taiwan. This has been a big concern of ours, especially in recent months.

Do you agree that the President must have flexible nuclear options to prevent conventional defeat at the hands of our adversaries in this particular scenario?

General COTTON. I do.

Senator ERNST. Okay, and I appreciate that. I know that a number of my colleagues have already brought up having a nuclear deterrence, theater nuclear forces in Asia. So I won't go through that again, but I just want to state that I do think it is important that we have those capabilities abroad, especially in that region, considering the scenario that we have seen through the 2018 National Defense Strategy and what we see occurring just in the daily news.

So I just want to emphasize my support for making sure that we have the capabilities necessary, if we should ever need those, present in INDOPACOM. Chairman Milley and Vice Chairman Grady also wrote in June that continued modernization and expansion of the ground based midcourse defense system is critical to defend the homeland from North Korean missiles. Do you agree that we must expand?

There is a lot of talk about modernization, but do you agree that we must expand, not merely modernize, homeland missile defense to take—to actually make sure that we are putting in check rogue nations like North Korea?

General COTTON. Senator, thanks for the question. You know, I think when we talk about missile defense, especially with the not only rogue nations, but now with two adversaries, near-peer adversaries that have different capacities and capabilities, I would agree that for the protection of the homeland, more options is better than less.

Senator ERNST. Yes, more options are better, and I know that we do receive pushback every once in a while on this idea that we need to expand and modernize. It is extremely costly, and just to emphasize to our fabulous American citizens that Jim Mattis, the way he phrased this in the past is, America can afford survival.

I think it is very important that we continue to look at ways that we can expand and modernize. Would you also agree that the capability to destroy hard and deeply buried targets actually enhances our deterrence by denying that our adversary doesn't have sanctuary from U.S. nuclear deterrence?

General COTTON. I would agree.

Senator ERNST. Yes, and can you think of examples where we might need to look into that further?

General COTTON. Senator, thanks for the question. I think there is opportunities for us to understand what technologies are available that can give us potentially nuclear or conventional, that can get after hard and deeply buried targets. If confirmed, I would love to lead the charge and be an advocate in understanding that and advocating for it.

Senator ERNST. Thank you for that. I appreciate it. Do you agree that we should sustain the B83 bomb until we have a suitable replacement?

General COTTON. I think that we need to be able to have an opportunity to provide options, and if that is taken off the table, then we no longer have an option to provide.

Senator ERNST. Yes. Thank you. I do appreciate that as well. Then of course, the President extended New Start for five years when he assumed office. In your opinion, in your best military opinion, are United States strategic arms constraints prudent given China's nuclear breakout, which is—they are not party to the treaty, and Russia's arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons, which are unaccounted for by the treaty?

General COTTON. Senator, I think whatever agreement or treaty that we could do to prevent proliferation is good, with a caveat, that it incorporates every aspect of what the signing agreement would be.

So what I mean by that are, you know, weapons that are currently not seen as strategic weapons need to be added to that calculus. So but any agreement or treaty that would prevent proliferation across the globe, I am for.

Senator ERNST. Okay. Thank you for your answers, and I do appreciate the opportunity to sit down with you in the office the other day and look forward to hearing more from you. I as well, growing up in Southwest Iowa, I also have been known to call it Strategic Air Command, so with you. But thank you very much for your time today, General.

General COTTON. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator Scott, please.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman Reed. General Cotton, first, thanks for your service. Congratulations on your nomination. Thank you for your willingness to serve. So here is what informs most of my work here on the Committee. First, the United States has several enemies who have no interest other than to harm us.

They want us to be weak, independent, and without allies. You talked about the importance of our allies. Chief among these enemies are the Chinese Communist Party and Vladimir Putin's regime. Second, our enemies wake up every day plotting to harm us. They think about it all the time.

Putin's invasion, brutal murdering, raping, and pillaging of Ukraine is, in his own words, his fight against the United States, as though anyone really need him to hear what he is up to. Jones Secretary, she contemplates the same thing for the free and democratic nation of Taiwan.

Third, most countries in the world whether they actually like us or not, they might be jealous of us, they do want America to be powerful and capable of deterring or defeating any aggressor who tries to turn the world into their own dictatorship.

Most countries know that there is really only two choices, a world where communist China, Putin, and the Ayatollah and maybe others, are making the rules for everyone, or one with a strong and independent United States that faces down aggressors, helps those who help themselves, leads alliances, and promotes state sovereignty and commerce.

So if you would agree with that, and I think most of us would agree with those, can you explain why the United States would not

want to have the most modern and expensive nuclear and strategic weapons we could have?

General COTTON. Senator, I do agree with that. To be frank, I am really happy with what this Committee has done in regards to where we are on the nuclear modernization front today. You know, are we late to need? Yes. Are we getting after it now? Absolutely. Are we in a position where we can ensure that we have a portfolio that can modularize and meet the needs in the future?

I think we do, Senator. But I agree with you, I am about the strong and not about the weak. So as—if confirmed, that is my position. I want to be from a position of strength, not from a position of weakness.

Senator SCOTT. So would you agree we ought to accelerate our nuclear modernization plan as much as we can?

General COTTON. Sir, if that is possible, let's do it.

Senator SCOTT. Yes. After your many years of experience, you know, who are enemies are and what they want, what they are capable of doing. You don't live in an ivory tower or academic bubble where you can tease out theories of disarmament and hope it all sort of goes well. So if you are confirmed, which I believe you will be—and this is not a diplomatic role, right? His role is not being a diplomat, your role is to be a fighter.

General COTTON. If confirmed, my role is to be a combatant commander.

Senator SCOTT. Your goal is to scare the living crap out of everybody.

General COTTON. Yes, sir.

Senator SCOTT. Good. Would you agree then the U.S. President should have a variety of strategic weapons and stockpiles so large that no enemy would even think about trying to attack America?

General COTTON. I think we need to have a stockpile that is credible and capable. Absolutely.

Senator SCOTT. Senator King brought this up earlier. I do appreciate the more direct and honest people can be when they are testifying. I know there is probably a lot of pressure to do whatever an Administration, whoever the Administration is, wants you to do.

But I do appreciate as much as you can to be direct, because all of us are trying to make the best decisions we can, and you are the expert. So thank you. Thanks for your service. I am glad you are going to serve—continue to serve.

General COTTON. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator Rosen, when you are ready, please.

Senator ROSEN. There it is. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that. Thank you, General Cotton, for testifying today, for your willingness to continue to serve. I really appreciate you, and so, of course, I hail from the great State of Nevada. I want to talk a little bit about the Nevada National Security site, the infrastructure upgrades, and how important, of course, it is to our nuclear mission.

I have talked about this a lot in this Committee, that the Nevada National Security site oversees the Stockpile Stewardship Program, principally at our U1a facility, which is, of course, an underground laboratory where scientists conduct those subcritical experiments

that verify the safety and reliability of our nuclear stockpile without, and I am going to repeat this again, without explosive testing.

U1a is undergoing major construction. That project is soon going to hold the most weapons capable radiographic system in the world. However, the Nevada National Security Administration currently faces significant infrastructure delays, including at our Nevada National Security site.

So General Cotton, as the current Commander providing two of the three legs of the triad, can you speak about the importance of the Stockpile Stewardship Program, and if confirmed, how you would plan to, working with your fellow Nuclear Weapons Council partners, in addressing the NNSA's infrastructure modernization challenges and unfortunate delays?

Chairman REED. Senator Rosen, thanks for the question. There is nothing more important than the relationship that we have with DOE, and specifically NNSA. As we talked throughout the hearing in regards to the modernization programs, they are interwoven—the platforms mean absolutely nothing if I don't have the assets available for the platforms. So to your question on infrastructure, you are absolutely—not only the Nevada locations, but all of NNSA locations are in dire need of upgrades in their infrastructure that dates back to Manhattan Project times. We are living in a different world today. As I keep saying, two near-peer adversaries, nuclear adversaries. We are going to have to ensure that the infrastructure are upgraded and are at the capacity and capability to meet the needs of the warfighter. You mentioned I as only two legs. I have modernization programs that are going to need new systems for them. Can't do that without the credible work of the men and women that make up the NNSA. But they are going to need infrastructure that will allow them to be able to do that type of work.

Senator ROSEN. Yes, and not just bringing you up to today's standards, but really preparing them for future challenges and innovation that we so desperately are going to need to compete. So thank you for that, because we do have to think about the technological end advancements.

With those advancements also come advancements from our adversaries so that creates increased threats as well. So the nuclear command control communication systems of the United States, we know they are connected through a network of communications, different data processing systems, and this is—could possibly leave us vulnerable for cyber-attacks.

In fact, in April of 2021, the Department of Energy's Inspector General audit concluded that cybersecurity weaknesses, they really do persist throughout the Department's unclassified networks, including those of the National Nuclear Security Administration.

So recent news, we have highlighted significant efforts by Huawei to build telecommunication structures right near our ICBM fields that possibly interrupt our forces, our systems. Can you talk about these potential threats, cyber threats, maybe not directly, but even nearby where some of our critical assets are located.

General COTTON. Thank you, Senator, for the question. So we are really paying attention to what we are seeing as a Chinese are taking advantage of some of the opportunities that they can have in

some locations that are near our, and in particular some of our ICBM sites.

So we are absolutely looking into that. To your point on cyber security, you know, as people talk about NC3, you know, I think your point is well taken. It is also, you know, any other support in the architecture of us, the nuclear community, like NNSA to ensure that they are just as cyber safe as NC2 platform would be.

So if confirmed, as part of the Nuke Weapons Council, as a member, I think that is something that we will continually have to have more than a discussion about but figure out how to get to the end state in that regard.

Senator ROSEN. Yes, well there is a lot of push points in hand-offs between agencies, information between one another. I look forward to working on that with you. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General COTTON. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator Sullivan, please.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and General Cotton, good to see you. I enjoyed our discussion the other day. Let me follow up on some of the topics that we talked about. First, if confirmed, you will work closely with the U.S. Space Force, Missile Defense Agency, Northern Command to guarantee the security of our Nation.

As you know, Alaska has a lot of critical assets that relate to missile defense, we are the cornerstone of missile defense, over 100 5th generation fighters, world class training ranges.

If confirmed, will you commit to visiting Alaska early in your tenure to see these assets, meet with the troops that are so critical to our homeland defense that you see in Alaska?

General COTTON. Senator, absolutely.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you. You know, we had a good discussion on basing. In May of 1992, the Strategic Air Command was essentially stood down and many of our bomber bases around the country, around the world were closed. We have been talking a lot about great power competition and how we need to be ready to confront two near-peer nuclear capable adversaries with very large militaries.

Given this reality, how should we be approaching the basing of our nuclear capable bomber fleet, particularly when the B-21 Raider comes online, and again, in line of some of the issues you and I discussed the other day?

General COTTON. Senator, thank you. I think initially when we talk about main operating bases, I am comfortable where we are. The conversation that we had is how do you—you know, how do we disperse forces in the future, especially with two near peers?

In our discussion, we talked about the agile combat employment construct that the Air Force with the Chief of Staff, General CQ Brown, is leading across the United States Air Force. I say it is a little different, what I call big wing airplanes, as opposed to our fighter forces. But the construct holds in and works as well.

I would love to be able to make sure that we have opportunities and availability throughout the country to add dilemma to our adversaries, if you will, on where our bomber forces are in the future.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me be a little more direct on that. As you know, Alaska is very strategically located, and staging options, rotational deployments, the ability to have not just 5th gen fighters but strategic global strike assets based in Alaska that are much closer to Russia, much closer to China, as you and I have discussed, a number of Air Force flag officers have seen this as a strategic concept that we can take advantage of, particularly with regard to great power competition. Do you have any thoughts on that, General, more specifically?

General COTTON. Well, I think the bases in Alaska act as great staging bases for bomber deployments. I think that is the question that you are asking.

The point of having a main operating base, if confirmed as Commander of STRATCOM, I would like to make that assessment to see what recommendations I would make to the service. But today, I think as we move forward, I think having it as an operating staging platform is critical for us.

I mean, if you recall, we talked about even, you know, ensuring that we have right, you know, runway lengths, etcetera, moving forward.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great, and I am looking forward to working with you. I look forward to support your confirmation. Let me talk about another topic we had the opportunity to discuss, and that is this idea of a strategic breakout as it relates to ICBM capability with regard to China.

The current STRATCOM Commander, Admiral Richard, called that, the recent reports on how quickly China is developing strategic missile capabilities, ICBM capabilities, he called it breathtaking. In your estimation, what is the greatest concern regarding this strategic breakout, and how should we as Armed Services Committee be focused on helping you counter or be ready for that very significant threat?

General COTTON. Thank you for that question. As recent as 2018, we would describe China as having a minimal deterrence, minimal nuclear deterrence. We would have probably had a conversation stating that it was about regional hegemony. Today, they are building ground based ICBM silos. They have the H-6N, nuclear capable medium bomber, that has a strategic capable launch platform.

Senator SULLIVAN. Just real quick, General, not to interrupt, but to give some context that in April of 2021, commercial satellite imagery revealed three new nuclear missile fields in Western China, each with approximately 120 missile silo. So this is incredible, is it not, in terms of the size?

General COTTON. It is. It is absolutely incredible and in such a short time, to Admiral Richard's point.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Senator Kelly, are you ready? Yes.

Senator KELLY. Yes, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, great seeing you again this week, and congratulations on your nomination. You know, during our meeting, we briefly discussed your priorities.

If confirmed, for your priorities for modernizing the nuclear triad, the long range standoff weapon, we talked a little bit about

that. Our LRSO represents one leg of the triad and replaces the aging AGM 86-B air launched cruise missile.

The Senate version of the defense bill put almost \$1 billion towards continued development of the LRSO. The LRSO is a unique component of our strategic deterrence in that it is an escalatory weapon, in mine and others' opinions.

When our adversaries see or maybe hear that are long range bombers are on high alert, it gives them some pause, and tensions can be cooled without a bomber ever lifting off.

So General, can I get your thoughts on the LRSO, and can I get your commitment, if confirmed, to the continued timely development of this weapon as a vital and de-escalatory component of our nuclear triad?

General COTTON. Senator Kelly, thank you for the question. Bottom line, up front, we absolutely need LRSO. The good news is the industry partner is doing incredible work keeping that program on time and on schedule. I am quite pleased as the Air Component Commander that is the lead MAJCOM, overseeing it now and watching it, seeing what that is doing.

So to your point, for our long range standoff bomber capability, that leg of the triad having a viable, credible weapons system is absolutely critical. The LRSO is that viable, critical weapon that is a de-escalatory weapon, because you are absolutely right, if we are generating bombers, it can send a signal before the first bomber even lifts off.

Senator KELLY. Any TRL concerns right now? Are there any things you see that you are worried about as we go forward that you could share here?

General COTTON. I have not. I have seen the testing that has been—that is underway has been very promising.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, General, and also during our conversation on Monday, we briefly talked about the tanker fleet. We have, you know, KC-135s in Phoenix. I know this is an issue you are familiar with as the head of the Global Strike Command.

My understanding is after talking to the team at the 161st Aerial Refueling Wing, which is a National Guard unit, is that unlike the KC-46, the KC-135 is not EMP hardened. I guess they have some kind of makeshift procedures that they could use, but it is clearly not able to handle electronic magnetic pulse that it might be up against depending on, you know, the location and the mission.

A small amount of KC-135s sit on a, you know, 24 hour a day, 7 days a week alert for the strategic defense deterrence mission. How concerned are you about the potential vulnerabilities of this aging tanker?

General COTTON. Senator, thank you for the question. The fleet holds, so I am confident that it can get us there. But I am even more confident in what we are seeing in the KC-46 that is being deployed. My fellow MAJCOM Commander, General Minihan, from Air Mobility Command, I know is on top of the procurement and deliveries of the KC-46.

For the KC-135, its delivery—you know, it coexists with the B-52. It was developed to tank the B-52. So it is an aging weapon system. But, Senator, it is still meeting the requirements to be able to get our bombers.

Senator KELLY. As we bring KC-46s online, would you agree that KC-135 squadrons that are participating in the deterrence mission should be given a priority to be replaced with the KC-46?

General COTTON. Sir, if confirmed, what I would like to do is make an assessment to kind of figure out what are the pros and cons of what those mission sets are doing using a legacy system as opposed to using the new modernized system.

Senator KELLY. Well, thank you, General, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General COTTON. Thank you, Senator Kelly. Senator Hawley, please.

Senator HAWLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, good to see you. I appreciated our conversation the other day. Thank you for—I guess it was just yesterday. Thank you for making time for me. Let's follow up, if we could, on a couple of things we talked about.

First of all, Admiral Richard, the current STRATCOM Commander, of course, has testified, and you and I talked about this, that the U.S. needs to think very seriously about the requirements for deterring two major nuclear powers at the same time, China and Russia, of course, and you said the same thing yesterday, which I appreciated.

Here is my question, if confirmed, would you commit to having STRATCOM do an analysis of the nuclear force requirements to deter both China and Russia now and into the 2030s?

General COTTON. Senator, thanks for the question, and the answer is absolutely yes. I think that is going to be critical for us. I called it earlier. You know, it is the strategic doctrine within STRATCOM. Not necessarily policy.

I am talking about the strategic doctrine within STRATCOM to ensure that we can do exactly what you asked. The other piece of that is then the national objectives from the President to make sure we can meet the national objectives as well.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Thank you for that. I think that would be hugely, hugely helpful. I asked Admiral Richard earlier this year about China's ability to engage in limited nuclear employment and whether or not that was growing. He said that it was, and he was very emphatic on this point.

He talked about how important it is for the United States to maintain our own limited nuclear options if we are going to be able to deter China in what is our pacing theater. So let me just ask you, do you agree that we need to be concerned about China resorting to limited nuclear employment in a conflict, let's say, over Taiwan?

General COTTON. Senator, I think any near-peer nuclear adversary, we have to be concerned about that.

Senator HAWLEY. Would you agree that having our own limited nuclear options, whether that is low yield ICBMs or nuclear arms, sea launched cruise missiles, that having those, maintaining those can help us deter China's limited nuclear use?

General COTTON. You know, as I described to the Committee, for me, it is about being able to give options to the Commander in Chief.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Are there other limited nuclear options that you think that we ought to be pursuing, whether that is in terms of additional capabilities, whether that is about posture changes, in order to deter Chinese and Russian limited nuclear use?

General COTTON. Senator, I think that goes along with that study that, if confirmed, you know, taking that really deep study to understand what that outcome and what—because what I want is success at the end of that, so what that would look like. So if confirmed, that would be part of that study.

Senator HAWLEY. Okay, very good. Fair enough. Fair enough. You said to me yesterday, which I appreciated—I am going to try to make sure I get you quoted correctly and then we talk about it, if we can prevent China from crossing the Taiwan Strait and they know that we have got a viable nuclear deterrent, then it is possible that Beijing might not escalate at all.

I thought that was right on the money. I agree with that 100 percent, and I just want to give you a chance to elaborate that on that here, because it sounds to me like what you are saying is the right approach to deterring a Chinese invasion of Taiwan is denial, is to deny them the ability to do that at first instance, backed up by a very credible nuclear deterrent.

So am I, do I have that right, and would you just—would you elaborate on why you think that is the right combination?

General COTTON. Senator, I think that the whole reason that we have the strategic deterrence that we have today and the triad that we have today, is to ensure that our adversaries understand that today shouldn't be the day for them. So as we were having that conversation, that is what I meant. I think that they would understand that if you have a credible nuclear deterrent, it would make them think twice before engaging with us.

Senator HAWLEY. It is in those two things, the conventional denial, combined with the nuclear deterrent, those things have to sit together. Is that fair to say? I mean, they work hand in hand.

General COTTON. They work hand in hand. Conventional and nuclear works hand in hand.

Senator HAWLEY. Yes. Let me ask you this just on the question of our own nuclear modernization. Given the pace of China and Russia and their modernization, if confirmed, will you be looking for ways to accelerate our nuclear modernization, and identify those options for Congress so that we can work together to make sure that we push the pace like we need to?

General COTTON. If confirmed, I would do that, Senator.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Let me just ask you one final thing here in my remaining seconds. The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, it highlighted the importance of conventional nuclear integration, which we were just touching on, which, of course, is critical for strengthening conventional deterrence against adversaries who may use nuclear force for operational or coercive effects. Has the Department, in your view, made sufficient progress on the conventional nuclear integration since the 2018 NPR?

General COTTON. I think it has, because in the past we have probably—we didn't talk about it the way we should have. I think the integration on being able to talk about going from conventional

to nuclear as opposed to doing a pause x, if you will, and then having that conversation. We have made leaps and bounds in that regard.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Thank you, General. Thanks again for the conversation yesterday. Thanks for your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Hawley. Senator Warren, please.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations again on your nomination, General Cotton. So if confirmed, you will head U.S. Strategic Command, which will place you in charge of our nuclear weapons. I would like to continue the conversation that we had in my office about the importance of civilian control.

Last week, eight Former Secretaries of Defense and five Former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff released an open letter calling for a recommitment to principles of civilian control, which they called, and I want to quote them here, “the bedrock foundation of American democracy.”

The letter repeatedly emphasizes that policy decisions are ultimately up to the President, civilian political appointees, and Congress. So, General Cotton, can you start us out this morning by saying a word about your views on whether policy decisions, including ones about nuclear programs, should be made by civilians rather than Generals?

General COTTON. Policy is made by civilians, ma’am.

Senator WARREN. You are committed to that firmly?

General COTTON. I am committed to that firmly.

Senator WARREN. You know, I appreciate your emphasizing this point. It is the President’s job to determine the nuclear policy of the United States. But sometimes people who are in the role that you have been nominated for seem to get confused on that.

For example, your predecessor, Admiral Richard, stated publicly that he thought the Biden Administration should adopt the Trump Administration’s nuclear policy, and then he and his office actively lobbied Congress against cuts to the nuclear spending programs contained in the Biden Administration’s budget, the budget the President put forward and the Secretary of Defense came to this Committee to defend.

So, General Cotton, if confirmed, do you think it would be appropriate for you or your office to publicly lobby against the positions of the President and the Secretary of Defense?

General COTTON. No, ma’am, and you remember we had this conversation. The caveat that we agreed to was, you know, but I would always, especially for this Committee, be allowed to offer my best military advice.

Senator WARREN. And your best military advice. But policy is done by the Generals?

General COTTON. Policy is not made by Generals.

Senator WARREN. All right. Thank you. You know, we are counting on you to give your best military advice to the President, to the Secretary, or to Congress whenever you are called on to do so. But it is wildly inappropriate to try to box in the Commander in Chief on nuclear policy or to try to undermine his budget.

Now, one of the big ways that military leaders lobby for more spending, even when it directly contradicts the President's priorities, is through so-called unfunded priorities lists. These are wish lists that are required by law but have grown to be tens of billions of dollars and are being used by the services and the commands to game the budget process.

I don't think they ought to exist at all. General Cotton, do you agree that your Command's top priorities should actually be reflected in the budget you submit rather than in an extras list?

General COTTON. Senator, I think our requirements lists that we present should be included and covers down, and if our budget is short, as the Commander, my job is to ensure that I can execute my mission with the dollars that I have been given.

Senator WARREN. All right, so I want to make sure I understand you here, because you are saying your priorities should be in the budget and extras should be just that extras, not your priorities. Is that right?

General COTTON. As a MAJCOM Commander today, my priorities are in my budget.

Senator WARREN. Good. I like to hear that. Look, it is no secret that both President Biden and I want to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our National Security strategy. Spending \$364 billion just on nuclear weapons over the next ten years is unaffordable.

But I think even my colleagues who disagree with me on nuclear policy would agree that we should be asking DOD to write budgets that reflect their actual priorities. That is what it is I am driving for here and want to make sure that we do. I look forward to working with you, General.

General COTTON. Thank you, ma'am.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Warren. General, thank you for your testimony, for your service, and we look forward to rapidly bringing your nomination to a successful conclusion. Thank you very much.

General COTTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. With that, I will adjourn the hearing.

[Whereupon, at 11:41 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Prepared questions submitted to General Anthony J. Cotton, USAF by Chairman Reed prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

DUTIES

Question. What is your understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM)?

Answer. The Commander, USSTRATCOM creates plans and conducts operations to deter strategic attacks against the U.S. and our allies; and, should deterrence fail, restore deterrence, in concert with the Joint Force with the goal of defeating our Nation's adversaries. The Unified Command Plan (UCP) assigns USSTRATCOM eight specific responsibilities: Strategic Deterrence; Nuclear Operations; Global Strike; Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations; Missile Defense; Analysis and Targeting; Missile Threat Assessment, and DOD NC3 Enterprise Lead. These diverse responsibilities are strategic in nature, global in scope and intertwined with

Joint Force capabilities, the interagency process, and a whole-of-government approach.

Question. What background and experience do you possess that qualify you to perform the duties and responsibilities of the Commander, STRATCOM?

Answer. I began my Air Force career over 36 years ago as a Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile launch officer assigned to Strategic Air Command, the predecessor to U.S. Strategic Command. During my career, I have directly served in three of USSTRATCOM's eight mission areas: strategic deterrence, nuclear operations, and global strike. I also have extensive experience with the nuclear command, control, and communications enterprise, an essential element to performing these mission areas.

Additionally, I have commanded organizations at all levels, with each having equities within USSTRATCOM's portfolio. I commanded both the 341st Missile Wing and 45th Space Wing, Twentieth Air Force, and currently serve as the Commander of Air Force Global Strike Command and the Joint Force Air Component Commander to USSTRATCOM. All of my experiences have prepared me to address today's concerns and help work to solve tomorrow's challenges as the next leader of USSTRATCOM.

It is a privilege and an honor to serve this great Nation, and I fully recognize the complexity of this job in light of the present and projected global security situation.

Answer. *Question.* Given the lines of effort set forth in the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), what other duties do you anticipate the President or the Secretary of Defense might prescribe for you, if confirmed?

Commander, USSTRATCOM is assigned responsibilities as currently stipulated in the 2020 Unified Command Plan. The application of Integrated Deterrence to advance NDS priorities requires an increasingly robust integration between USSTRATCOM, the other Combatant Commands and the Interagency. If confirmed, I will work closely with the combatant commanders, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other senior military and civilian leaders regarding the duties assigned to Commander, USSTRATCOM.

Question. In your view, are there other roles or responsibilities that should be assigned to the Commander, STRATCOM?

Answer. The President's 2020 Unified Command Plan clearly delineates the responsibilities of Commander, USSTRATCOM. If confirmed, I will evaluate and assess the command's mission effectiveness and provide any recommendations, as necessary, regarding USSTRATCOM roles and responsibilities.

Question. Do you believe that there are any steps you need to take to enhance your ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the Commander, STRATCOM?

Answer. While I am not an expert in all USSTRATCOM responsibilities, if confirmed, I will endeavor to obtain the requisite expertise across USSTRATCOM's full portfolio of missions. I look forward to working with the other combatant commanders, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense and other senior military and civilian leaders to ensure mission success and that our strategic deterrent remains safe, strong, and effective.

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

Answer. Civilian control of the Armed Forces is a bedrock principle founded in the Constitution and applicable laws, and it is the core of the American civil-military dynamic. If confirmed, I will make it my priority to fully support civilian leadership by providing expert advice and an honest perspective. Additionally, I will faithfully participate in and support the role of congressional oversight, which is an equally important function to connect the military with the American people's elected officials.

CHAIN OF COMMAND AND RELATIONSHIPS

Question. Section 162(b) of title 10, United States Code, provides that the chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense and from the Secretary of Defense to the combatant commands. Section 163(a) of title 10 further provides that the President may direct communications to combatant commanders through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Do you believe that these provisions facilitate a clear and effective chain of command?

Answer. Yes.

Question. In your view, do these provisions properly effectuate civilian control of the military? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes. The chain of command originates from the President to the Secretary of Defense, and from the Secretary to combatant command commanders. If confirmed, I will be a committed advisor to our Nation's senior military and civilian leaders and execute lawful orders as directed.

Question. Are there circumstances in which you believe it is 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. No, but if the President or Congress deemed such a change appropriate, U.S. Military personnel would still be accountable to the Title 10 chain of command and subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the Law of Armed Conflict during any operation.

Question. In your view, what factors should be considered in making recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and the President for the use of strategic forces and capabilities?

Answer. Factors for consideration are highly situation dependent but will likely include, but are not limited to, the specific National security objectives to be achieved; the consequences of employing vice not employing strategic force; and the anticipated effects of this action (or non-action) on the vital interests of the United States, its allies and partners. Any such decision would only be made in accordance with the principles of Law of Armed Conflict and via a deliberative process involving the appropriate senior leaders across the government.

Question. The law and traditional practice establish important relationships between the Commander, STRATCOM, and other senior officials of the DOD and the U.S. Government. Please describe your understanding of the relationship of the Commander, STRATCOM, to each of the following officials:

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Answer. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal military advisor to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. Likewise, for global military integration, the Chairman advises the Secretary on the allocation and transfer of forces to address trans-regional, multi-domain and multifunctional threats. The Chairman is the most senior Ranking Member of the Armed Forces but does not exercise command authority over any military forces or serve in the chain of command between the President and Secretary of Defense and combatant commanders. The Chairman consults with the combatant commanders, and evaluates and assists in achieving their requirements and plans.

The Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who performs such duties as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff may prescribe, is by law the second Ranking Member of the Armed Forces and acts for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in his absence or disability. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, keeping them informed on all matters for which I am responsible as commander, USSTRATCOM.

Question. The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment

Answer. The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment is responsible to the Secretary of Defense for all matters pertaining to acquisition; contract administration; logistics and materiel readiness; installations and environment; operational energy; nuclear, chemical, and biological defense; the acquisition workforce; and the defense industrial base. USSTRATCOM works closely with this office to both sustain current forces and advance the current nuclear modernization program, as well as advocate for future capabilities to ensure a safe, secure, reliable, and effective strategic deterrent. The Under Secretary also chairs the Nuclear Weapons Council of which the Commander, USSTRATCOM is a member. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Under Secretary on matters related to USSTRATCOM.

Additionally, if confirmed, I would work with the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment in their role as the NC3 Capability Portfolio Manager and NC3 Principal Staff Assistance to advocate and field modernized NC3 capabilities.

Question. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

Answer. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) is the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense for defense policy and leads the formulation and coordination of National security policy within the Department of Defense. The USD(P) ensures the integration of defense policies and plans to achieve desired objectives, and is also responsible for strengthening relationships and defense cooperation with U.S., allies, and partners. These policies, along with other National-level direction, guide USSTRATCOM strategic planning and operations.

Question. The Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering.

Answer. The Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (USD(R&E)) is the principal staff advisor on all research, engineering, and technology development activities and programs in the Department. The USD(R&E) serves as the Department's chief technology officer with the mission of advancing technology and innovation for the armed forces, to include advancing those capabilities supporting USSTRATCOM's assigned mission areas.

In addition, the USD(R&E) has the oversight lead for critical capabilities managed by defense agencies and field activities with whom USSTRATCOM regularly interacts, including the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, Missile Defense Agency, Defense Innovation Unit, and the Defense Science and Innovation Board offices. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Under Secretary for Research and Engineering on all matters specific to USSTRATCOM.

Question. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities.

Answer. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities is the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on National Security and Defense Strategy and the capabilities, force, and contingency plans necessary to implement the Defense Strategy.

The Assistant Secretary supports the Secretary and Deputy Secretary in providing DOD with guidance to align resources, activities and capabilities with National Security and Defense Strategy goals, which influences USSTRATCOM's global force posture, strategic planning, and operations. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Assistant Secretary on matters related to the USSTRATCOM portfolio.

Question. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy.

Answer. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy is responsible for the overall supervision of policy for the Department of Defense for space warfighting. Their policy portfolio encompasses the Department's strategic capabilities for integrated deterrence: space, nuclear weapons, cyber, missile defense, electromagnetic warfare, and countering weapons of mass destruction. The Assistant Secretary also serves as the Principal Cyber Advisor to the Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Assistant Secretary on matters related to integrated deterrence, nuclear weapons, electromagnetic warfare and other missions, as appropriate, within the USSTRATCOM portfolio.

Question. The Commander, U.S. Northern Command.

Answer. Commander, U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) is responsible for Homeland Defense, which is closely tied to USSTRATCOM's strategic deterrence mission. The Commander, USNORTHCOM, is also the Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), which conducts aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning in the defense of North America. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Commander, USNORTHCOM, to strengthen strategic deterrence and assure our allies and partners.

Question. The Commander, U.S. Space Command.

Answer. Commander, U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) is responsible for the planning and execution of global space operations as directed. USSTRATCOM continues to support USSPACECOM's progress toward Full Operational Capability.

USSPACECOM provides vital space resources and capabilities to USSTRATCOM in support of its assigned missions. If confirmed, I will continue the close collaboration with Commander, USSPACECOM, in matters affecting both Commands, our Nation, and our allies and partners.

Question. The Commander, U.S. European Command.

Answer. U.S. European Command's (USEUCOM) mission in the European area of responsibility is to secure and defend the United States and its allies and partners. In light of the strategic implications of the recent Russian aggression in Ukraine, this is a vitally important and critical endeavor. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commander, USEUCOM, to achieve mission success and to strengthen strategic deterrence for our Nation and our allies and partners.

Question. The Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

Answer. Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's (USINDOPACOM) mission is to secure and defend the United States and its allies, and partners in the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility. Commander, USINDOPACOM has a very diverse area of responsibility with a growing number of strategic challenges, including China's rapid military expansion. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Commander, USINDOPACOM, to achieve mission success and to strengthen strategic deterrence for our Nation and our allies and partners.

Question. The Director of the Missile Defense Agency.

Answer. The Director, Missile Defense Agency deploys and maintains an effective and robust layered missile defense system capable of defending the United States,

our allies, and deployed forces. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Director, the Joint Staff, and the other Combat Commanders to improve missile defense capabilities and ensure they remain effective against the developing and increasingly complex missile threats.

Question. The Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration

Answer. By law the Department of Energy's Under Secretary for Nuclear Security is the Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). The Administrator's responsibilities include all programs and activities necessary to maintain and enhance the safety, reliability, and performance of the Nation's nuclear weapons stockpile. Additionally, the Administrator serves as a principal on the Nuclear Weapons Council and executes duties of importance to USSTRATCOM, but remains independent of the Department of Defense's operational control. If confirmed, I will confer regularly and work closely with the Administrator.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

Question. In your view, what are the major challenges you would confront if confirmed as the Commander, STRATCOM?

Answer. The challenges facing USSTRATCOM are unprecedented. For the first time in history, the Nation will soon face the need to deter two nuclear capable competitors who will have the capability to unilaterally escalate a conflict to any level of violence, in any domain, worldwide, at any time and with any instrument of national power. The 2022 NDS directs the Department to act urgently to sustain and strengthen deterrence, with the People's Republic of China (PRC) as our most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge for the Department. Russia also poses acute threats, as illustrated by its brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. This strategic environment requires an integrated deterrence approach from the Joint Force, working seamlessly across warfighting domains, theaters, spectrum of conflict, other instruments of U.S. national power in our network of alliances and partnerships.

I fully support modernizing our strategic nuclear deterrent capabilities across the Triad, the supporting stockpile and infrastructure, Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications, and our Integrated Tactical Warning/Attack Assessment capabilities. Many of these efforts are just-in-time with little to no margin for delay.

As the Commander of Air Force Global Strike Command, I directly support USSTRATCOM as the Joint Force Air Component Commander by providing two of the three legs of the Triad. I am confident USSTRATCOM employs a highly trained and effective strategic deterrent force ready to respond decisively if called upon.

If confirmed, I will continue existing efforts to deter nuclear competitors and continue comprehensive assessments to validate force readiness and the effectiveness of existing efforts to sustain the existing force and to ensure nuclear modernization plans are realized. Continuity and oversight of these efforts are critical to ensuring USSTRATCOM is always postured to deter strategic attacks against the United States, our allies and partners.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to be a strong advocate for our Nation's strategic forces. I support the need to sustain and modernize our nuclear Triad and its supporting infrastructure, along with the continued development of current and future capabilities required to deter strategic attack in all domains against the U.S., allies, and partners.

Additionally, if confirmed, I will continue to lead the effort to modernize and synchronize Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications and the Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations. I will also work with the Office of Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, and other Combatant Commands to further the development of integrated global planning, posturing, and operations.

NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

Question. The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) puts forward an integrated deterrence framework that incorporates the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) and Missile Defense Review (MDR) under the NDS. The priorities of the strategy are (1) defending the homeland; (2) deterring strategic attacks against the United States, allies, and partners; (3) deterring aggression, while being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary, prioritizing the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific, then the Russia challenge in Europe and (4) building a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem.

In your view, does the 2022 NDS accurately assess the current strategic environment, including prioritization of the most critical and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes, in my view, the NDS accurately assesses the security environment. Outcomes of the NDS reflect close coordination across the Department, to include with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Question. In your view, does the 2022 NDS correctly specify and prioritize DOD missions in the context of the current strategic environment?

Answer. The NDS correctly articulates the Department's priorities in the current strategic environment. It highlights Integrated Deterrence as one of the Department's principal approaches to advance these priorities—working seamlessly across warfighting domains, theaters, the spectrum of conflict, other instruments of National power, and our Alliances and partnerships.

Question. In your view, does the 2022 NDS specify the correct set of capabilities by which the United States can achieve its security objectives in the face of ongoing competition and potential conflict with China or Russia? What do you perceive as the areas of greatest risk?

Answer. The NDS correctly notes that the foundation for deterring aggression requires building enduring advantages across the DOD, defense industrial base, private sector and academia to innovate and modernize the Joint Force to make rapid adjustments meeting the new strategic demands.

The NDS articulates a vision for the Department to develop, design, and manage our forces—linking our operational concepts and capabilities to achieve strategic objectives. This requires a Joint Force that is lethal, resilient, sustainable, survivable, agile, and responsive. China and Russia continue to pose the greatest risk to our Nation, driving the need to modernize our strategic Triad.

Question. The 2022 NDS integrates the Nuclear Posture and Missile Defense Reviews as part of an overall “integrated deterrence” strategy. What would successful implementation of the 2022 NDS and its integrated deterrence strategy look like for STRATCOM, in your view?

Answer. For USSTRATCOM, successful implementation of the 2022 NDS will result in a shared, Department-wide approach to Integrated Deterrence that enables the planning and execution of tailored deterrence approaches against two nuclear capable near-peer adversaries. This framework will also result in enhanced collaboration with U.S. interagency partners to develop varied means of deterring aggression alongside our allies and partners. The Department recognizes deterring strategic attack is an enduring requirement throughout peacetime, crisis, and conflict.

Question. In your view, are the operational concepts and STRATCOM's plans to implement them, appropriately focused, scoped, and resourced to counter the threats and achieve the national security objectives identified by the NDS?

Answer. The Joint Force's current operational concepts, as well as USSTRATCOM's plans, are appropriately focused and scoped to achieve NDS objectives at this time. Should our adversaries shift their strategy and/or continue to build capability and capacity, we will need to re-evaluate the currently programmed Joint Force resources.

Question. The 2022 NDS lists “deterring strategic attacks against the United States, allies, and partners” as a priority in its Strategy. In your view what is meant by the term “strategic”?

Answer. Strategic attack includes nuclear attack of any scale directed against the U.S. Homeland or the territory of allies and partners, whether on the ground, in the air, at sea, or in space. Our strategy also accounts for existing and emerging non-nuclear threats to include a narrow range of high consequence, strategic-level attacks.

Question. If confirmed, what changes or adjustments, if any, would you advise the Secretary of Defense to make in the Department's implementation of the 2022 NDS?

Answer. I have no changes to recommend at this time. If confirmed, I will periodically review and provide any recommendations to the Secretary regarding NDS implementation progress whenever appropriate.

Question. If confirmed, what revisions or adjustments would you recommend the Secretary of Defense make to the 2022 NDS as a result of changes in assumptions, policy, or other factors?

Answer. I have no changes to recommend at this time. If confirmed, I will periodically review and provide any recommendations to the Secretary regarding NDS implementation progress whenever appropriate.

NUCLEAR MODERNIZATION AND THE NUCLEAR POSTURE REVIEW

Question. The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review states a declaratory policy that “as long as nuclear weapons exist, the fundamental role of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack on the United States, our allies, and partners. The United States would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners.” This is consistent with the long-standing views of multiple administrations.

Do you support this policy?

Answer. Yes. This policy provides a prudent approach to deterring the range of strategic attacks in a challenging and increasingly complex security environment.

Question. Some have argued that instead of “extreme” the word “existential” should be used to describe the circumstances. What are your views on this wording?

Answer. I understand that the Nuclear Posture Review working group examined numerous strategies and related declaratory policy approaches in undertaking the 2022 NPR, including those using the term “existential.” The NPR determined that a policy of continued calculated ambiguity focused on “extreme circumstances” was prudent given the current security environment. I support the decision made to select the declaratory policy described in the 2022 NPR.

Question. Given the current geopolitical situation with Russia, China, North Korea and other rising nuclear powers would you support at present a “sole purpose” or “no first use” declaratory policy?

Answer. No. Implementing a “No First Use” or “Sole Use” policy would have a detrimental effect on strategic deterrence and our extended deterrence commitments to our allies and partners. A strategy of calculated ambiguity, which is supported by our allies, is the most effective way to deter Russia, China, North Korea or other nuclear armed adversaries. I understand that the 2022 NPR retains the goal of moving toward a “sole purpose” declaration which will require us to work with our allies and partners to identify concrete steps that would allow us to do so.

Question. In your view, how well do the findings and recommendations of the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review synchronize with the integrated deterrence framework of the 2022 NDS?

Answer. The NPR and NDS are fully synchronized as they were developed and published simultaneously.

Question. The 2022 NPR did not support a nuclear armed sea launched cruise missile, however, other senior military officers, including the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the current commanders of STRATCOM and U.S. European Command (EUCOM) have testified that they support continued development of the system. Do you support the continued development of a nuclear armed sea launched cruise missile as a means to deter Russia or China?

Answer. U.S. Strategic Command must maintain a range of strategic military options and capabilities to present to the President in the event of a contingency. These options and capabilities must be able to address both current and emerging threats. If confirmed, I will be able to more fully review the range of options within our nuclear Triad and how we can continuously improve our ability to deter and, if deterrence fails, restore deterrence, against our nuclear adversaries. I am aware of differing perspectives regarding the nuclear armed sea launched cruise missile. If confirmed, I will analyze the arguments for and against this program and will provide my best military advice to DOD military and civilian leadership.

Question. The 2022 NPR did not support maintaining the B83 gravity bomb to hold hard and deeply buried targets at risk. What are your views on the B83 gravity bomb as a means to hold hard and deeply buried targets at risk?

Answer. A comprehensive assessment of our HDBT defeat capabilities was started following the 2018 NPR and further study was endorsed in the 2022 NPR. This work, once concluded, can inform our decision on HDBT defeat capabilities. If confirmed, I look forward to seeing the results and working with DOD to address the operational concerns created by the B83-1 retirement.

Question. What are your views on the B61-11 to hold certain classes of hard and deeply buried targets at risk?

Answer. The B61-11 gravity bomb is effective against a very specific subset of hard and deeply buried facilities. Retiring the B61-11 requires addressing these targets using other means compatible with modern delivery platforms. These means must be effective across a range of target types and scenarios, and adaptable to meet evolving adversary threats. If confirmed, I look forward to working with DOD to address the operational concerns created by the B61-11 retirement.

Question. Are there other nuclear capabilities that should be considered to signal or further deter Russia or China and their growing nuclear arsenals?

Answer. Nuclear force structure, capacity and capability must be continuously evaluated to ensure strategic deterrence remains credible in support of integrated deterrence. Any identified nuclear capacity and capability gaps should be addressed as soon as possible to provide the Joint Force an effective military capability able to achieve Presidential objectives and to demonstrate national resolve in response to growing threats.

Question. Do you support reducing the alert level of the deployed intercontinental ballistic missile force? Why or why not?

Answer. No, I do not support changing our current ICBM alert level. The ICBM force provides the Nation with a responsive, highly reliable, and cost effective deterrent capability which is crucial to the effectiveness of our nuclear Triad. The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review affirmed our ICBM alert posture is appropriate and contributes to strategic stability. Any attempt to defeat the hardened and geographically dispersed ICBM force requires an adversary to execute a complex strategic attack consisting of hundreds of weapons. An alert ICBM force reduces any incentives a potential adversary might have to execute a disarming first strike; this cost-benefit calculus enhances deterrence.

Question. Do you support the New START Treaty?

Answer. I support any diplomatic solution which enhances the security of our Nation. To date, New START has contributed to bilateral stability by limiting the offensive strategic arms it addresses. The verification regime provides transparency by delivering tangible information on Russia's strategic capabilities, greatly enhancing our understanding of their force posture.

However, New START does not address Russia's large and growing arsenal of non-accountable nuclear weapons and novel nuclear systems. If confirmed, I would stand ready to offer my best military advice as to these capabilities and other relevant aspects of a future agreement.

Question. Do you support continued efforts to negotiate a follow-on treaty to New START that would include Russia and China?

Answer. I support diplomatic efforts to pursue arms control agreements capturing the full scope of Russian and Chinese nuclear capabilities, including their nuclear weapons and novel nuclear systems that are not currently the subject of arms control agreement. Any such agreements must be verifiable, enforceable, and enhance the security of our Nation and our allies and partners.

Question. Do you believe the current program of record is sufficient to support the full modernization of the nuclear Triad, including delivery systems, warheads, and infrastructure?

Answer. The current program of record is the absolute minimum USSTRATCOM requires to provide effective strategic deterrence. The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) affirms previous NPR findings that the nuclear Triad and the associated nuclear command, control, and communications system remain the most effective way to maintain strategic deterrence against existing and future threats. Stable, consistent, and on-time funding is critical both to sustain the legacy nuclear Triad and to execute nuclear modernization programs on schedule in order to deliver the future nuclear deterrence capabilities required to address rapidly expanding national security threats.

Question. Do you believe the current program of record will provide adequate capabilities to meet the challenges posed by growing Chinese and Russian nuclear forces?

Answer. The current program of record is the absolute minimum USSTRATCOM requires to provide effective strategic deterrence today. As the threats from Russia and China continue to grow, we must continuously evaluate our nuclear force structure, capacity, and capability to ensure strategic deterrence remains credible and effective. Any identified nuclear capacity and capability gaps should be addressed as soon as possible to provide the Joint Force an effective military capability able to achieve Presidential objectives and to demonstrate national resolve in response to growing threats.

This is a point of continual reevaluation. As the world becomes more diverse and threatening, we must continuously evaluate our nuclear force structure, capacity, and capability to ensure strategic deterrence remains credible. Today, with our current programs of record, we are in a good place. We are modernizing our systems and transitioning our nuclear forces and capabilities to ensure our security. I believe more frequent assessments than the current 4-year cycle will be required to ensure we can identify, mitigate, and properly address any gaps in a timely manner, as necessary. If confirmed, I will make a commander's assessment on the entire strategic deterrence portfolio to ensure our requirements are sufficient to address the threat.

Question. What are your ideas for working across the Joint Force to mitigate the risk that all three legs of the nuclear Triad will “age out” simultaneously at the end of the 2020’s?

Answer. Nuclear modernization continues to be a top priority for the Department of Defense.

The nuclear Triad has credibly deterred adversaries and assured allies for more than 6 decades. To mitigate the simultaneous transition risk, we must maintain and sustain our existing nuclear enterprise until replacement systems are fully fielded. Doing this provides needed Triad flexibility and offsets risks resulting from unanticipated issues or emergent challenges. Where possible, we must pursue every opportunity to accelerate modernization. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Department, the Services, and NNSA to mitigate risks across the Triad.

Question. Specifically, do you support and intend to advocate for the funding, development, and fielding of the Long-Range Stand-Off weapon and the associated W80-4 warhead?

Answer. Yes, development and on-time delivery of the Long Range Standoff (LRSO) cruise missile and its associated W80-4 warhead is essential to maintain an effective and credible air-delivered nuclear deterrent, especially as adversaries deploy advanced digital air-defense systems. The current Air-Launched Cruise Missile was deployed at the height of the cold war to evade Soviet-era analog defenses and will be nearly 50 years old when LRSO is fielded.

Question. Do you support and intend to advocate for the funding, development, and fielding of the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile weapon system program and the associated W87-1 warhead?

Answer. Yes, I strongly support and will continue to advocate for both the Sentinel ICBM and Mk21A/W87-1 Reentry Vehicle (RV) programs. The Air Force continues to successfully execute the Sentinel recapitalization program, which will provide an effective, reliable, and low cost ICBM deterrent for decades into the future. Likewise, the Mk21A/W87-1 program is replacing the aging Mk12A/W78 RV and will deploy as Sentinel’s second RV soon after Sentinel achieves Initial Operational Capability.

Question. What do you believe is the greatest risk to successful deployment of the Sentinel program?

Answer. Sentinel is the largest, most complex ICBM recapitalization program undertaken by the Nation since the 1960’s. This multifaceted development program will challenge Air Force and industry partners in ways not seen for a generation.

There is no margin left in our legacy Minuteman III ICBM system; Sentinel must deliver on time to avoid any capability gaps in the land-based leg of the Triad. Therefore, the greatest risk to the Sentinel program would be a lack of stable, consistent, and on-time funding, which is critical to fielding this program on schedule.

The Sentinel program has met every acquisition milestone to date, but the program is starting to see follow-on effects from the COVID pandemic. Supply chain issues are making it hard to get materials and hardware on the original forecasted schedule and costs. Additionally, we face challenges in meeting the required ramp increases in contractor workforce and government manpower. Both the Prime contractor and the AF are assessing these challenges and assessing impacts to the program.

Question. The Nuclear Weapons Council has laid out a schedule for modernization of the nuclear weapons stockpile over the next 20 years. This schedule involves multiple warhead life extension and replacement programs, in addition to maintenance of the existing stockpile systems.

Is this schedule—and the program priorities it establishes—appropriate in your view?

Answer. Yes, the Nuclear Weapons Council stockpile plans provide a prioritized, long-term vision aligned with the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review and the National Defense Strategy.

Question. Are the multiple components of the nuclear modernization plan appropriately sequenced and scoped to meet the operational needs of the STRATCOM commander?

Answer. Yes, the multiple components of the nuclear modernization plan are appropriately sequenced and scoped as highlighted in National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) production planning documents for the stockpile and Service delivery system acquisition strategies and plans. Integrated DOD and NNSA priorities for nuclear stockpile, infrastructure, and delivery system modernization programs will continue to meet USSTRATCOM’s current and projected operational requirements.

While today’s stockpile is safe, secure, and militarily effective, concerns exist as many replacement programs are just-in-time or late to need. Even though the nu-

clear modernization plan sequences the components in a logical and prioritized manner, stockpile and weapon system modernizations must execute on time to address this concern. Continued stable, consistent, and on-time funding is critical to delivering the future nuclear deterrence capabilities required to address rapidly expanding national security threats.

Question. In your view, does the Stockpile Stewardship Program provide the tools necessary to ensure the safety and reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile without testing? If not, what tools are needed?

Answer. Yes, the Stockpile Stewardship Program relies on state-of-the-art supercomputers, large-scale scientific facilities, and workforce expertise. NNSA advanced science and technology programs enable the Nation to sustain the deterrent well beyond projected lifetimes without testing. Continued support for the science, technology and engineering base is crucial for the viability of the Stockpile Stewardship mission.

Question. In your view, what priority should be attached to programs to modernize and replace critical infrastructure of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)? On what timeline should these programs be executed, in your view?

Answer. Consistent with the NDS emphasis on building enduring advantage, NNSA infrastructure modernization must be prioritized and accomplished now to prevent delays in fielding required capabilities.

Question. Do you support the long-standing STRATCOM requirement for NNSA to produce no fewer than 80 plutonium pits per year by 2030?

Answer. There is a statutory requirement for NNSA to re-establish a credible pit production capability by 2030 (50 USC 2538a). NNSA has notified Congress this date will not be met. USSTRATCOM supports all ongoing efforts to realize pit production as close to 2030 as is possible. There are three factors driving the need to establish a capability to deliver at least 80 plutonium pits per year to the stockpile: 1) replacement of aging pits in the stockpile; 2) modernization of stockpile systems to enable improved margins, safety, and security; and 3) risk mitigation to address unforeseen technical issues in the stockpile.

Question. What do you intend to do to mitigate the risk that, according to the NNSA's own analysis, none of the considered options for plutonium pit production seem likely to meet the 2030 requirement?

Answer. Risk mitigation measures include evaluating options to reuse newer legacy pits produced prior to the 1990 Rocky Flats closure. Reuse will allow future stockpile modernization programs to continue near-term. Additionally, expanded scientific studies are planned to better inform on the impacts of pit aging within our primary systems. However, reuse limits opportunities to improve modernized stockpile systems safety, security, and effectiveness and does not address aging issues over the long term.

STRATCOM READINESS

Question. How would you assess STRATCOM's current readiness to execute the 2022 NDS and STRATCOM's operational concepts and plans?

Answer. In my current position as the Joint Forces Air Component Commander to Commander, USSTRATCOM, I can State from firsthand experience USSTRATCOM is ready to execute its assigned responsibilities. Within Air Force Global Strike Command, we conduct continuous operations in accordance with operational concepts and plans to support the National Defense Strategy. While the aging weapon systems generate readiness challenges, USSTRATCOM remains postured to execute its plans and conduct Joint Force operations. If confirmed, I will assess USSTRATCOM's other mission areas to evaluate ways to further improve its readiness to execute the 2022 NDS and USSTRATCOM's operational concepts and plans.

Question. What is your assessment of the risk that STRATCOM has accepted in regard to its readiness to execute operational concepts and plans in furtherance of the 2022 NDS and the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review?

Answer. The preponderance of risk in implementing the 2022 NDS and NPR comes in the form of current and future risk. This risk is mitigated via the application of the NDS concept of Integrated Deterrence which relies on all instruments of National power to influence an adversary's decision calculus. We must maintain the readiness of our current fielded forces while protecting the timelines of modernization programs of record.

Question. If confirmed, how would you address any gaps or shortfalls in STRATCOM's ability to meet the demands placed on it by the 2022 NDS and the operational concepts and plans that implement the strategy especially with respect

to the growing non-strategic arsenal of Russia and the rise of China's nuclear deterrent?

Answer. In my current position as the Joint Forces Air Component Commander to the Commander, USSTRATCOM, I have experience balancing the sustainment of legacy systems while continuing to develop modernization programs to meet the demands of the NDS. If confirmed, I will continue to evaluate whether USSTRATCOM has any gaps or deficiencies in our ability to meet those demands and develop mitigation strategies for identified shortfalls. As the threat environment evolves, including Russia's non-strategic arsenal and China's nuclear capabilities, we will remain aware of any potential USSTRATCOM gaps or shortfalls.

STRATCOM ORGANIZATION AND MISSIONS

Question. STRATCOM's missions have shifted substantially over the last 5 years, with the transition of U.S. Cyber Command to a unified combatant command, the transfer of the combatting weapons of mass destruction mission to U.S. Special Operations Command, and the stand-up of U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM) as a Unified Combatant Command.

Do you believe that the current organization structure of STRATCOM is the most effective means for carrying out its mission?

Answer. Yes. As Commander of the Service and Functional Component Command for Air Forces assigned to USSTRATCOM, I am confident the command is properly organized to successfully carry out all UCP-assigned missions. In my Component Commander role, I have had several discussions with ADM Richard regarding his ongoing comprehensive study and assessment USSTRATCOM's organizational structure and processes. This assessment is crucial to maintaining readiness today, while enabling the Command's ability to adapt to the continually evolving threat. If confirmed, I will continue this analysis to ensure USSTRATCOM maintains the leading edge of strategic deterrence and readiness.

Question. If confirmed, what innovative ideas would you consider providing to the Secretary of Defense regarding STRATCOM missions, organization, and operations?

Answer. If confirmed, I would focus upon optimizing the integration and phasing of USSTRATCOM capabilities across all instruments of National power. To do so, we must continue efforts across the Department, interagency, industry, and academia to rapidly develop and field innovative technologies for the Joint Force. Collaboration will decrease the time it takes to prototype and field these next-generation systems from research labs to the warfighters.

Question. What are your views in transferring STRATCOM's missile defense mission to SPACECOM?

Answer. The Department must streamline command and control, while removing seams from missions such as missile defense and space domain awareness, and improving the use of high demand multi-mission sensors. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing the close collaboration in this mission area with Commander, USSPACECOM, in matters affecting both Commands, our Nation, and our allies and partners.

Question. What is STRATCOM's long-term role with respect to conventional prompt strike systems as compared to other combatant commands such as U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) or EUCOM?

Answer. USSTRATCOM has a long-standing requirement for a highly responsive, non-nuclear global strike capability to hold distant, defended, and/or time-critical threats at risk without crossing the nuclear use threshold. Conventional hypersonic strike weapons (HSWs) directly support the USSTRATCOM's Unified Campaign Plan assigned missions of Strategic Deterrence and Global Strike.

USSTRATCOM is preparing to command and control HSWs the day they are fielded, and the Command is working with other Combatant Commands to establish concepts of operations and mission execution tactics, techniques and procedures. HSWs will bolster the overall strategic deterrence posture by providing senior leadership and Combatant Commands additional strike options to achieve theater and national objectives during all stages of conflict.

Question. Do you believe STRATCOM should continue to be responsible for electronic warfare or should it be transferred to another combatant command or as a Chairman's Directed Activity?

Answer. Before considering moving the electromagnetic warfare (EW) mission, USSTRATCOM needs to complete the foundational work of organizing and operationalizing EW for the Department to ensure it receives the proper attention that has been lacking for a considerable period of time. To date, the Secretary of Defense directed USSTRATCOM to stand up a 2-star led direct reporting unit responsible for raising the readiness of the Joint Force. Much work remains to be

done. If confirmed, I will continue the efforts required to achieve electromagnetic spectrum superiority.

Question. If confirmed, what role would you establish for yourself in coordinating with the Commander, SPACECOM, to advocate for space programs critical to missile defense, missile warning, and nuclear capabilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work directly with Commander, USSPACECOM to advocate for space capabilities supporting all USSTRATCOM's assigned missions, including those capabilities enabling strategic deterrence, nuclear operations (missile warning, protected communications, and nuclear command, control, and communications), joint electromagnetic spectrum operations, global strike, and missile defense.

Question. STRATCOM retains responsibility for the integrity of the Integrated Tactical Warning and Attack Assessment (ITW/AA) System. Yet, U.S. Space Command has assumed responsibility for the ground and space sensors, the Missile Warning Center, and the Combatant Commander's Integrated Command and Control System, which fuses the data from these sensors.

Specifically, what would you do, if confirmed, to ensure that these ITW/AA elements of the missile warning mission are not lost or degraded between STRATCOM and SPACECOM?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work directly with Commander, USSPACECOM to advocate for ITW/AA capabilities essential to USSTRATCOM's strategic deterrence mission and necessary to address evolving threats. I will also continue to monitor and ensure the integrity of all systems through a set of processes that ensure the resourcing, operational certification, system integration, and end-to-end testing support the ITW/AA system.

Question. What long-term role do you see for non-traditional ITW/AA sensors as part of a missile warning architecture?

Answer. Efforts to integrate non-traditional ITW/AA sensors are critical to meeting the challenges posed by adversaries. Utilizing all available real-time data provides more accurate and relevant warning data to better characterize threats to the homeland, deployed forces, and allies worldwide. Non-traditional ITW/AA sensors ensure combatant commanders have the needed information to recommend the most appropriate and proportional response to national leadership.

UCLEAR COMMAND, CONTROL, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Question. In response to a task from the Secretary of Defense in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, the Commander, STRATCOM, directed the creation of the Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications Enterprise Center, housed under the STRATCOM J6.

What is your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the NC3 Enterprise Center?

Answer. As the NC3 Enterprise Lead for the Department of Defense, the Commander, USSTRATCOM is responsible for overseeing and managing day-to-day operations, assessing enterprise risk, defining NC3 enterprise level requirements, and directing enterprise systems engineering and integration. The NC3 Enterprise Center (NEC) brings a Defense-wide view approach to NC3 while designing and developing the next generation of NC3 Enterprise architecture over the coming decade.

Question. How will you address the inherent challenge associated with housing a systems engineering and architecture organization within a warfighting combatant command?

Answer. The NC3 Enterprise Lead leverages Services' engineering and architecture expertise and associated ties already established by former DISA Joint Systems Engineering and Integration Office. Systems Engineering and Integration (SEI) now reports to the NC3 Enterprise Center (NEC) and their manpower transitioned in October 2020. The NEC's governance structure mitigates any associated challenges.

Question. What is your understanding of the relationship between the NC3 Enterprise Center and the Military Services that procure, operate, and maintain various NC3 systems?

Answer. Services and Combat Support Agencies (CSAs) remain responsible for delivering the NC3 capabilities needed to execute NC2 operations. If confirmed, as NC3 Enterprise Lead, I will provide the Services and CSAs with overarching NC3 enterprise requirements, engineering, operations, and planning guidance to inform their systems requirements development, resource planning, reporting and engineering.

Question. How would disagreement between STRATCOM and the Air Force or Navy on the utility of a particular NC3 system be resolved, in your view? How does

the new organization differ from the prior Combatant Command-Service relationship?

Answer. Under the new construct, disagreements on the utility of a particular NC3 system will be addressed during regular engagements with the Combat Support Agencies through venues such as quarterly Systems Engineering Authorities Board, semi-annual operational risk management meeting, and annual Deputy's Management Action Group sessions. These additional forums provide multiple opportunities to address any concerns.

Gap identification, requirements, and NC3 capability development responsibilities previously dispersed throughout the Department have been consolidated under the NC3 Enterprise Lead, providing a more focused effort.

Question. What is your understanding of the relationship between the NC3 Enterprise Center and the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, given its role as the NC3 Capability Portfolio Manager?

Answer. The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD (A&S)) serves as the NC3 Capability Portfolio Manager and NC3 Principal Staff Assistant with increased responsibilities for resources and acquisition. In this capacity, USD (A&S) supports the NC3 Enterprise Lead by executing day-to-day management of the NC3 portfolio and advising on acquisition, mitigation options and prioritization. The NC3 Enterprise Center's day-to-day efforts within the operations management, enterprise requirements, and next generation divisions provide vital data to USD (A&S) to enable programmatic risk assessment and analysis of current and future enterprise capabilities.

Question. What is your understanding of the relationship between the NC3 Enterprise Center and the Defense Information Systems Agency?

Answer. As a Combat Support Agency (CSA), Defense Information Systems Agency retains program management of key NC3 infrastructure programs, such as Defense Red Switch Network and Crisis Management System. If confirmed, as the NC3 Enterprise Lead, I will provide the Services and CSAs with overarching NC3 enterprise requirements, engineering, operations, and planning guidance to inform their systems requirements development, resource planning, reporting and engineering.

Question. What is your understanding of the continued role of the Council on National Leadership Command, Control, and Communications Systems as it relates to STRATCOM and the NC3 Enterprise Center?

Answer. The Council serves as the oversight and synchronization body for the broader National Leadership Command Capability (NLCC) Enterprise, such as Continuity of Operations (COOP)/Continuity of Government (COG) and senior leader communications. The Council makes prioritization decisions among competing NLCC interests. The NC3 Enterprise Lead represents and advocates for the NC3 stakeholders to the Council.

Question. In your view, is the NC3 Enterprise Center authorized the appropriate number of people, in the appropriate occupational specialties and skill sets, to accomplish its mission?

Answer. Yes, the NC3 Enterprise Center, through the Joint Manpower Validation Board process, has been authorized an appropriate number of billets with the requisite occupational specialties and skillsets. However, full resourcing of validated positions has yet to occur. There are challenges to develop, recruit, and retain necessary talent in Federal service, especially as the private sector competes for the same skills. If confirmed, I will pursue multiple approaches to obtain the required NC3 manpower, to include the recruitment of talent from academia, private-public partnerships, and industry.

Question. If confirmed, how would you use your new role to advocate for the modernization of NC3 systems?

Answer. NC3 modernization must remain a top DOD priority. If confirmed, I will serve as both CDRUSSTRATCOM and the NC3 Enterprise Lead. Through the authorities of these distinct but related positions, I will work to ensure NC3 capabilities meet national objectives and those capabilities are adequately resourced. I will also continue to work closely with the Joint Staff, Services, and other stakeholders to execute NC3 modernization requirements and advocate for the rapid delivery of threat-based NC3 capabilities to enable our Triad.

Question. Do you believe the NC3 Enterprise Center should have a limited systems acquisition capability or demonstration or validation of concepts that normally would not be undertaken by the services?

Answer. If confirmed, I would defer on recommending changes in assigned responsibilities until I have had the opportunity to thoroughly evaluate and assess the command's mission effectiveness in the context of an evolving global security environment.

Question. What is your unclassified assessment of NC3 centers for cybersecurity of the NC3 system?

Answer. The overall cyber mission assurance of the nuclear deterrent remains high due to a mixture of cybersecurity improvements, the isolation of numerous systems, and redundancies within the Nuclear Command and Control System (NCCS). However, with crucial modernization efforts ongoing or planned for many NCCS components combined with adversary interest into our critical nuclear systems, we must continue to strengthen the cyber resiliency of our critical systems to ensure the constant readiness of the Nation's nuclear deterrent.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS COUNCIL

Question. If confirmed, you would become a member of the Nuclear Weapons Council, together with the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Under Secretaries of Defense for Policy, Acquisition and Sustainment, and Research and Engineering; and the Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration.

If confirmed, what would be your priorities for the Nuclear Weapons Council?

Answer. I support the Nuclear Weapons Council's (NWC) enduring priority to maintain a safe, secure, effective, and ready nuclear capability for the Nation. The Nation now faces a convergence of simultaneous modernization efforts across Triad delivery platforms, weapons, and infrastructure. If confirmed, my priority would be to build upon previous NWC success collaboratively with other principals to ensure the enterprise executes programs on time, within budget constraints, in order to sustain legacy systems and field modernized capabilities.

Additionally, consistent with the NDS assertion that the foundation for deterring aggression is building enduring advantage, I would prioritize development of the necessary modern research and production facilities and retain trained people to sustain the force. The Nation's nuclear weapons stockpile is underpinned by a resilient and responsive production infrastructure and robust science and technology programs. All of these elements are critical to maintaining a safe, secure, and effective deterrent force.

Question. In your view, what challenges does the Nuclear Weapons Council face over the next 4 years, and what would you do to address these challenges?

Answer. The next 4 years mark a critical juncture as we enter a multi-decade period of increased risk to the Triad and across the stockpile. There are comprehensive modernization requirements across the nuclear weapons enterprise addressing aging nuclear weapons stockpile, re-establishing critical nuclear infrastructure capabilities, and executing Service delivery system acquisition programs.

Consistent with the NDS assertion that the foundation for deterring aggression is building enduring advantage, continued success is contingent on building a robust and resilient infrastructure to include plutonium pit production, uranium and lithium processing, and increased non-nuclear production capabilities. Maintaining confidence in our weapons hinges on having the necessary modern facilities and skilled workforce to sustain the deterrent force.

If confirmed, I look forward to participating in executing these responsibilities to ensure USSTRATCOM has a safe, secure, effective and reliable stockpile.

STRATCOM is an integral part of the annual certification process for the safety, security, and effectiveness of U.S. nuclear weapons.

Question. Would you recommend any changes in STRATCOM's role in the annual certification process, or the process generally?

Answer. If confirmed, I will receive copies of annual assessments from each of the national security laboratory Directors and inputs from USSTRATCOM's team of experts to support the annual assessment letter. This process has proven to be an effective tool for identifying stockpile issues of concern. At this time, I have no recommendations for change.

NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE REVIEW

Question. In 2014, then-Secretary of Defense Hagel directed a comprehensive review of the DOD nuclear enterprise in response to adverse incidents involving U.S. nuclear forces and their senior leadership. The report included recommendations to address management of personnel, attend to security requirements, increase senior leader attention, promote culture change, and numerous other concerns. The monitoring of the implementation of corrective actions has been transferred from OSD back to the Services. If confirmed, you will be arguably the most visible advocate for the servicemembers responsible for executing STRATCOM's mission.

In your view, are the Military Services maintaining appropriate focus on implementing the corrective actions required by the Nuclear Enterprise Review?

Answer. Yes. The Services are actively engaged in addressing the items identified from the 2014 nuclear enterprise reviews. The Department chartered a body comprised of members from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Services, Joint Staff, and Combatant Commands to oversee completion of the corrective actions. The Service Secretaries and Chiefs personally participate in update briefings to the Deputy Secretary of Defense on at least an annual basis. This construct ensures continued senior level awareness and involvement.

Question. What progress has been made to date to correct the deficiencies identified by the Hagel review?

Answer. The Deputy Secretary of Defense-chaired Nuclear Deterrence Enterprise Review Group tracks completion of tasks identified by Secretary of Defense Hagel's comprehensive review. Progress has been made in advocating for modernized nuclear forces, updating security rules to accurately reflect modern threats and weapons system vulnerabilities, and actively engaging nuclear enterprise professionals at all levels to promote a positive culture necessary to field a credible nuclear deterrent.

Question. What are the most important tasks that remain to be done, in your view?

Answer. We must continue to advocate for the on-time fielding of modernized Triad forces and Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications capabilities and require active engagement from leadership at all levels to prevent repeating past mistakes. Doing so ensures we have a ready force able to meet future challenges.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that attention and focus on the morale and welfare of the servicemembers executing and supporting STRATCOM's mission is maintained?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging all levels of USSTRATCOM and other elements of the nuclear enterprise from operations, maintenance, and security personnel at the unit-level to scientists and engineers at the National Laboratories to ensure a sustainable and effective nuclear deterrent.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GEOGRAPHIC COMBATANT COMMANDS

Question. If confirmed how should STRATCOM work with EUCOM to deter Russia and the threat of non-strategic nuclear weapons with respect to NATO and our European allies? How should STRATCOM work with INDOPACOM to achieve similar objectives with regard to China and United States Pacific allies?

Answer. USSTRATCOM should continue to work very closely with USEUCOM and USINDOPACOM to implement the National Defense Strategy central idea of Integrated Deterrence. If confirmed, I will maintain the already strong relationships between the organizations at all levels. Additionally, I will work diligently to share concepts, plans, and operations, and advocate for the capabilities required to most effectively enhance security of the United States and our allies and partners.

Question. More broadly, if confirmed, how will you work with the Commanders of both EUCOM and INDOPACOM to enable theater nuclear planning capabilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to work aggressively to implement National Defense Strategy's central idea of Integrated Deterrence. With regards to planning, I will work closely with my fellow Combatant Commanders to focus efforts integrating and synchronizing global plans, including nuclear planning.

MISSILE DEFENSE

Question. What is your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the STRATCOM commander related to missile defense?

Answer. The 2020 Unified Command Plan assigned a broad range of responsibilities to USSTRATCOM which are further elaborated by Department guidance. USSTRATCOM is currently the designated combatant command for leading trans-regional missile defense planning, providing operations support, and advocating for capabilities. As missile threats around the globe continue to expand, these responsibilities will become increasingly important.

Question. What do you believe to be the appropriate function of the Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense?

Answer. The Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense (JFCC IMD) leads and assesses global missile defense planning in support of USSTRATCOM and regional Combatant Commands (CCMDs). JFCC IMD provides subject matter expertise across the missile defense enterprise in matters of operational support, policy, strategy, joint training, and education.

JFCC IMD also supports advocacy for the warfighters' global missile defense requirements through engagement and partnering with the Missile Defense Agency,

other Agencies, Services, CCMDs, and allies and partners. I believe these functions are appropriate.

Question. If confirmed, what role would you anticipate playing in representing the views and advocating for the needs of the Combatant Commanders for missile defense capabilities, and how do you believe the warfighter perspective should inform the U.S. missile defense program?

Answer. The Unified Command Plan directs Commander, USSTRATCOM, to advocate for missile defense. USSTRATCOM accomplishes this through a collaborative Warfighter Involvement Process, providing critical warfighter perspective. USSTRATCOM advocates for capabilities needed to successfully execute operational plans.

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 2022 Missile Defense Review (MDR) codified existing policy on missile defense and endorsed follow-on actions to improve U.S. capability.

What are your views on the relationship between missile defense and nuclear deterrence?

Answer. Missile defense and nuclear deterrence are both critical elements of Integrated Deterrence. The nuclear deterrent is foundational to deterring strategic attack and the use of nuclear weapons against the U.S. and our allies and partners. Missile defense diminishes adversary confidence that a missile attack against the U.S. or our allies or partners will be successful.

A robust, credible layered missile defense system, paired with our conventional and nuclear forces, enhances the ability to deter strategic attacks, deny benefits, and impose costs against any potential adversary.

Question. If confirmed as Commander, STRATCOM, what priorities would you recommend for U.S. missile defense capabilities for the Homeland?

Answer. The Department must prioritize the ability to find, fix, and track inbound ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missiles. Deploying responsive, persistent, resilient, and cost-effective sensor-to-shooter capabilities, combined with a robust command and control network, is required to address the range of emerging threats.

Question. Do you believe over the long-term that Hawaii should have a missile defense radar capability based on the growing threat from North Korea?

Answer. My understanding is the current programs of record providing defense for Hawaii include capabilities such as Sea-based X-band Radar (SBX), Long Range Discrimination Radar (LRDR) and the Army/Navy Transportable Radar Surveillance (AN/TPY-2).

If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the specific missile defense requirements for Hawaii, and will work with the Missile Defense Agency and the Department to see how the current programs of record and future space-based capabilities can best be utilized.

Question. Do you believe the current ground-based interceptor fleet is appropriately sized to address potential ICBM threats from North Korea and other rogue nations?

Answer. The current Ground Based Interceptors (GBI) fleet has the capability to defend the United States from a limited threat from North Korea and other rogue nations. If confirmed, I will support the Missile Defense Agency, fellow Combatant Commands, and the Department to assess and appropriately size the future GBI fleet.

Question. Do you support the deployment of the Next Generation Interceptors (NGI) as a means to address the long-term threat posed by North Korea?

Answer. I support the development of NGI. If confirmed, I will work with Commander, USNORTHCOM and other stakeholders on the need for the NGI program and other capabilities required to defend the homeland as a means to address the long-term threat posed by North Korea.

Question. If the NGI program is demonstrated to be operationally effective, would you support eventually replacing the current Ground Based Interceptors with a common fleet of NGI interceptors?

Answer. The Next Generation Interceptor (NGI) is designed to increased performance parameters and provide higher reliability, allowing the United States to pace and stay ahead of anticipated North Korean and rogue nation threats. If NGI performs as advertised, I would support a Departmental decision to replace the Ground Based Interceptors.

Question. In your view, are there additional steps that DOD could take to improve United States and allied defenses against North Korea's missile capabilities?

Answer. Integrated Air and Missile Defense coordination, including the critical areas of sensing and threat tracking, plays an important role in improving interoperability while mitigating adversary capabilities. The Department must continue integration efforts with regional partners and allies to increase technical interoperability, defense burden sharing, and improve command and control for the more efficient use of limited high-demand low-density defensive capabilities.

Question. Do you agree that a space-based sensor layer is a required next step to enable a wide variety of missile defense capabilities, including improved tracking and targeting of advanced threats?

Answer. Yes. Emerging complex missile threats, such as hypersonic weapons, were designed to evade legacy detection systems through speed, maneuverability, and with relatively lower signatures. A space-based sensor layer would provide launch-to-target tracking, facilitate detection, and support defense against hypersonic missiles.

If confirmed, I will work closely with USSPACECOM and USNORTHCOM to track and target threats to the Nation, and with Missile Defense Agency and Space Development Agency to advance and expand space-based sensors and boost-phase defense capabilities. Our approach must integrate active missile defense and advanced technologies to neutralize missile threats.

Question. What are your views on the efficacy of space-based interceptor capabilities?

Answer. Space-based interceptors may provide the opportunity to engage offensive missiles when they are most vulnerable—during the initial boost phase of flight, and before countermeasures are deployed. If confirmed, I will engage stakeholders to continue discussions on the cost and technical feasibility of this potential capability.

Question. What are your views on the efficacy of boost-phase intercept systems?

Answer. Boost-phase intercept concepts have great potential, and the Department has been exploring how to resolve the challenges associated with threat system engagement at this point in the launch sequence. The need for persistent space and terrestrial sensor integration, pursuit of kill technologies like High Energy Laser/Directed Energy, non-kinetic weapons, and the policies permitting rapid engagement, are important to successful boost-phase intercept. If confirmed, I will engage stakeholders in discussions to ensure a thorough examination of these concepts.

Question. Has DOD developed and implemented operational concepts, plans, and policies appropriate to the governance and utilization of space-based and boost-phase intercept programs? What would you do to address this issue, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support the Department's efforts to examine concepts and technologies for both space-based and boost-phase intercept programs. Operational concepts, plans, and policies would be developed in parallel as space-based and boost-phased intercept programs are potentially designed and fielded.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure that any missile defense system that is deployed is both operationally effective and cost-effective?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Missile Defense Agency, the Services, and Joint Staff to ensure missile defense requirements are met through capability and utility assessments, operationally relevant tests and evaluations, and life cycle cost estimates to enable sustainment and meet mission plans.

ELECTRONIC WARFARE AND SPECTRUM OPERATIONS

Question. STRATCOM is the designated combatant command for synchronizing electronic warfare, as well as for ensuring the warfighter has adequate spectrum resources to conduct operations.

What are the major issues associated with joint electronic warfare operations, in your view?

Answer. Assured access to, and freedom of maneuver within the electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) continues to atrophy. The Department has taken initial steps, such as developing the EMS Superiority Strategy, in order to gain and maintain superiority in a contested and congested electromagnetic operational environment. Presently, joint electromagnetic warfare is rebuilding capability and force structure, but we need to move faster. There is still much to do to have a truly integrated Joint Force; having unitary and dedicated Department EMS operations governance would provide a cohesive and preferred solution.

Question. In your view, should STRATCOM be responsible for synchronizing non-kinetic fires for the geographic combatant commanders? If so, how should STRATCOM accomplish this mission?

Answer. No. The affected Combatant Commander and the provider of the non-kinetic fires should have synchronization responsibilities.

Question. Do you believe the Department has adequate simulation capability to test joint electronic warfare operations?

Answer. No. Due to the congested nature of the electromagnetic spectrum, the ability to conduct open-air testing is constrained. There are few ranges where advanced electromagnetic warfare testing can take place; these locations are often forced to cease testing due to unintended interference. These challenges impact the way the Joint Force trains. Despite renewed emphasis and efforts to fund and fix, the Department's simulation capability is still limited. Past Departmental initiatives such as Electronic Warfare Infrastructure Improvement Plan are being fielded on our test and training ranges. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency is investigating closed-loop simulation, which may provide the capability needed to conduct such simulations.

Question. Do you believe the Department has adequate exercise capability to train the Joint Force electronic warfare threats and operations?

Answer. No. As demonstrated in recent exercises, deficiencies continue to be repeated, which range from the lack of the availability of high-end training equipment to the infrequency of training opportunities across the force. Training deficiencies, coupled with shortcomings in Blue force capabilities, contribute to the force's inability to maintain previous EMS advantages. Additionally, free-air ranges are atrophying in both size and transmission authorization. Alternate methods to train the force to operate in a contested and complex EMS throughout all domains must be explored.

Question. Do you believe that DOD has adequately integrated electronic warfare operations into its operational plans?

Answer. No. While we are making progress in advancing electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) operations, including electromagnetic warfare, across the Department, there is still much work to be done. Integrating EMS into our operational plans requires understanding how EMS operations impact all weapons and systems. Spectrum-dependent systems are the norm now, and how these systems are employed must be carefully planned to account for any countermeasures effect.

Question. What are the major spectrum issues facing DOD with regard to its ability to conduct operations?

Answer. The spectrum is increasingly constrained by commercial use, limiting the Department's ability to conduct operations against rapidly evolving threats. Wherever possible, we must achieve a balance to advance new virtual approaches enhancing joint electromagnetic warfare capabilities without dependence on open-air spectrum access.

The Department is seeking solutions to provide situational awareness across the electromagnetic spectrum (EMS), and for command and control of offensive and defensive EMS operations, training, and testing across all domains and mission areas.

Question. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to ensure that the Department continues to have access to the spectrum necessary to train and conduct operations?

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue to advocate on behalf of the Department for spectrum access, including microwave, infrared, and ultraviolet bands for training and operations.

We must consolidate departmental efforts to maintain and retain Electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) superiority. This requires joint collaboration on requirements for future EMS/electromagnetic warfare capabilities. The Services should leverage and develop capabilities that are interoperable across the Department.

Evaluating and addressing the impacts of private sector spectrum competition is critical to DOD training and operations. Developing an analytical capability to rapidly assess potential impacts to programs from EMS auctions must be a priority. Additionally, we must engage with other Federal agencies to advocate for required spectrum to ensure the Department can operate without interference. The DOD must ensure spectrum access to meet its EMS requirements-based needs.

EMS operations pervade every military domain, across all Joint Functions, and throughout the entire range of military operations. We must properly train and equip the Services and Joint Force to ensure success.

DOD SENIOR OFFICIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Question. In your view, do a sufficient number of General/Flag officers and members of the Senior Executive Services (SES) have the advanced training, academic degrees, and expertise in scientific and technical disciplines needed to lead the future Joint Force and the scientific/technical civilian workforce?

Answer. Yes. As the threat advances, the future fight will become increasingly technologically complex using interconnected multi-domain architectures, data-based

tools, and other advanced capabilities. We must foster the development of senior leaders with insights into the advantages and limitations of these military technologies. If confirmed, I will foster the development of tech-savvy senior leaders.

Question. Are the career paths for General/Flag officers and SES with technical skills sufficient to ensure that DOD and its Components can develop capability performance requirements that will counter rapidly changing technological threats, execute complex acquisition programs, and make informed investment decisions? If not, what would you do to address this deficiency, if confirmed?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will work with the Department, Joint Staff, and other stakeholders to ensure senior leaders continue to receive the training, advice, and assistance they need to continue to do so. We must continue to evolve as industry and technology evolves.

Question. In your view do current General/Flag officer and SES assignment policies incentivize highly qualified senior leaders to serve in scientific and technical programs? If not, what changes do you believe are necessary to incentivize qualified senior leaders to seek assignment to such positions and duties?

Answer. Yes. The Air Force assesses officers with STEM degrees and then provides continual critical thinking and professional leadership development at key increments throughout their career. This continual, targeted development ensures we have a pool of highly qualified and experienced military senior leaders. While we develop senior civilians in a similar manner, we also have the added flexibility to hire some of our SES talent based on unique STEM skills and continue to provide executive leadership education and training courses targeted toward strategic executive competencies. If confirmed, I will work with OSD, Joint Staff, and other DOD stakeholders to ensure our assignment policies continue to incentivize military and civilian executive talent with challenging assignments, developmental opportunities, and key recognition for their significant and lasting contributions to the Department's mission.

Question. Are you satisfied that OSD, the Joint Staff, and the Military Services have in place sufficient training and resources to provide General/Flag officers and members of the SES the training, advice, and assistance they need to "play the ethical midfield"? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes. Sufficient training and resources are in place to provide senior military and civilian leaders the training, advice, and assistance they need to "play the ethical midfield." The ability to make ethical decisions is identified as a specific Desired Leader Attribute for leaders throughout the military and is foundational to all Joint and Service developmental efforts.

PREVENTION OF AND RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT

Question. In your view, are the policies, programs, and training that the Department has put in place to prevent sexual assault and respond to sexual assault when it does occur, adequate and effective?

Answer. One sexual assault is too many. If confirmed, I will continue to support efforts to address chain of command accountability, prevent retaliatory behavior, reduce root causes, and foster a culture of dignity, respect, and one that is free from sexual assault and sexual harassment.

I welcome and encourage the institutional changes that are helping to combat sexual assault. I applaud Congress and the Secretary of Defense's efforts to not only address enhancing accountability, but to emphasize climate and culture change, the prevention of sexual assault, and comprehensive and consistent victim care and support.

Question. What is your view of the role of the chain of command in maintaining a command climate in which sexual harassment and sexual assault are not tolerated?

Answer. The chain of command is essential in establishing the desired climate and culture across the organization. When an organizational culture is established, it starts at the top with not only leading by example, but setting and communicating expectations to leaders at all levels. This establishes a standard of accountability that will bring forth and inspire positive change in culture to all military units to make a better force for all servicemembers.

Building trust is foundational, and our climate must be welcoming and inclusive where everyone feels a part of the team and is treated with dignity and respect, no matter their role.

If confirmed, I will continue to set expectations for professional environments free of persistent and corrosive problems like sexual assault and harassment and require leaders at all levels to do the same.

In order to be a prepared and ready force for the future threat environment, our airmen, sailors, soldiers, marines, and guardians must be in a workplace of dignity and respect. I am serious, it is vital to the Nation that our servicemembers perform their missions in healthy and inclusive environments, nothing else will be tolerated.

Question. If confirmed, what role will you establish for yourself in increasing focus on the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Answer. Commanders must build climates where trust, respect, and inclusion are the norm. . The recent reforms to the military justice system strike the right balance of preserving a commander's role in good order and discipline, while providing commanders and the servicemembers they lead with specialized personnel outside of the chain of command, to address accountability for sexual assault and sexual harassment. Every Commander, starting at the top, must build trust with airmen, soldiers, sailors, marines, guardians, and civilian professionals. If confirmed, I will require every leader be part of a culture that emphasizes dignity and respect. I will hold leaders accountable allow permissive environments for behaviors that are not consistent with the culture of dignity and respect our personnel deserve.

Question. What is your view of the necessity of affording a victim both restricted and unrestricted options to report a sexual assault?

Answer. I fully support both restricted and unrestricted options for reporting sexual assault. These options allow victims to control how they want to seek accountability and how they are afforded the best, tailored support to help them through the trauma of sexual assault with needed medical care, counseling, and support.

Question. What is your assessment of the Department's implementation of protections against retaliation (including reprisal and social ostracism) for reporting sexual assault?

Answer. No servicemember should have to fear retaliation for reporting a sexual assault or sexual harassment.

Just recently, the Department has issued a policy aimed at improving how we document and assist survivors, employees, witnesses, and other people who perceive retaliation associated with sexual assault. The Department has also started using the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Data base to document these cases more consistently across the Department.

In addition, there is a new integrated prevention workforce that will focus on retaliation prevention through command climate assessment and action planning as well as other prevention activities.

We also inform individuals on what to do if they believe they are experiencing retaliation, including informing them to go directly to the DOD Inspector General or providing them with more information about available help and reporting avenues from their Sexual Assault Response Coordinator.

We will continue to analyze our climate data over time to ensure that we are trending in the right direction where victims feel safe to report without fear of retaliation. If confirmed, I will ensure USSTRATCOM complies with all Department programs and directives, beginning with leaders across USSTRATCOM's forces taking a central role in ensuring personnel are trained on the sexual assault reporting protections against retaliation, reprisal, and social ostracism.

Question. In your view, do military and civilian leaders in STRATCOM have the training, authorities, and resources needed to hold subordinate commanders and supervisors accountable for the prevention of and response to sexual harassment and sexual assault? If not, what additional training, authorities, or resources to you believe are needed, and why?

Answer. We are taking action to ensure that we are fostering an environment of dignity and respect for all personnel. Preventing sexual assault and sexual harassment is a priority for the Department. We will not compromise on this issue and we will not rest until we get this right.

My assessment is that USSTRATCOM has the proper training, authorities, and resources for prevention and response, but it is a continual process of reviewing the data to ensure we are trending in the right direction. Leaders and supervisors are responsible for establishing and maintaining a professional culture and climate where offenders are held appropriately accountable and victims get the restorative care and support they need.

If confirmed, I will continuously evaluate whether leaders across USSTRATCOM forces have the right tools, training, and resources, and when necessary, assess whether those leaders are being held accountable for their individual unit's prevention and response.

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 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 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 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 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 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 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 yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

NORTH KOREA

1. Senator HIRONO. General Cotton, United States policy has long focused on the denuclearization of North Korea. Despite United Nations (UN) Security Council sanctions and diplomatic efforts, we've continued to see North Korea advance its nuclear weapons and missile programs. Recently, North Korea has increased its testing activity, and United States military and intelligence agencies have warned that North Korea appears to be preparing for a nuclear test. If confirmed, what will you do to address the escalating nuclear threat from North Korea?

General COTTON. If confirmed, I will work closely with both USINDOPACOM and United States Forces Korea commanders in order to address the evolving threats and to strengthen strategic deterrence for our Nation and our allies and partners. I will also ensure USSTRATCOM is fully engaged in broader U.S. Government efforts in support of the National Defense Strategy's integrated deterrence approach.

INTEGRATED DETERRENCE

2. Senator HIRONO. General Cotton, United States Indo-Pacific Command's (INDOPACOM) area of responsibility (AOR) includes Russia, China, and North

Korea, all of which possess nuclear weapons. It is imperative that the United States Strategic Command (STRATCOM) Commander and INDOPACOM Commander work closely together to enhance the security of the United States and the region. If confirmed, how would you work with INDOPACOM to achieve strategic deterrence in the region?

General COTTON. Nuclear deterrence is the backstop to strategic and integrated deterrence. The Indo-Pacific theater demonstrates the importance of this relationship. If confirmed, I will bolster the already strong relationship between USSTRATCOM and USINDOPACOM. These efforts will build upon and enhance integration of our conventional and nuclear capabilities at all levels, from cross-Combatant Command planning teams, to exercises, and real-world operations such as Bomber Task Force (BTF) missions. I believe these efforts enhance our relationships with allies and partners, and most importantly, assure allies of our extended deterrence commitment. Finally, if confirmed, I intend to routinely engage the Commander, USINDOPACOM to improve coordination and guarantee the strategic deterrence mission.

AUSTRALIA AND NUCLEAR ASSURANCE

3. Senator HIRONO. General Cotton, I've been a big supporter of the AUKUS [Australia, United Kingdom, United States] agreement, in which the United States and U.K. are partnering with Australia to help them develop a nuclear-powered submarine fleet and advance other technologies to improve each nation's security posture in the Pacific. However, this relationship is focused on nuclear propulsion, not nuclear weapons. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has expressed his commitment to nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. If confirmed, you will be the combatant commander responsible for nuclear deterrence. What sentiments would you offer to demonstrate the United States nuclear enterprises' commitment to assurance of non-nuclear allies, such as Australia?

General COTTON. In my current position as the Commander of Air Force Global Strike Command, we have an existing and excellent working arrangement with Australia through Bomber Task Force Activities and other military interoperability exercises and exchanges. Many of our non-nuclear allies often participate when we conduct these activities in concert with USINDOPACOM. I support both non-proliferation and our steadfast commitment to Australia. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Australian leaders, other Pacific allies and partners, and USINDOPACOM to reinforce extended deterrence commitments.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ANGUS S. KING, JR.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

4. Senator KING. General Cotton, do you support the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)?

General COTTON. From my position as the Commander of Air Force Global Strike Command, I can attest that our military operations are currently conducted in a manner consistent with international norms. I recognize that many provisions of the treaty are considered customary international law, and ratification of this agreement falls under the constitutional purview of the Senate.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DEB FISCHER

CHANGES SINCE THE COLD WAR

5. Senator FISCHER. General Cotton, some portray nuclear deterrence as a remnant of the Cold War; however, while many of our systems date to that time period, is it not true that our posture, policies, and employment strategies have been repeatedly updated to meet changing deterrence requirements?

General COTTON. Yes, our defense posture, policies and employment strategies have been repeatedly updated and revised to address the evolving and increasingly complex strategic environment we face today. If confirmed, I will provide my best military advice on policy and strategy choices to address the ways strategic deterrence – and integrated deterrence – must continue to develop and evolve.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JONI K. ERNST

DETERRENCE STUDY

6. Senator ERNST. General Cotton, during your verbal testimony you committed to directing United States Strategic Command to undertake a study of deterrence requirements vis-à-vis China and Russia, if confirmed. In your personal opinion, what specific questions should a study by U.S. Strategic Command consider and address?

General COTTON. Fundamentally, deterrence is influencing an adversary's decision-making calculus to choose restraint over aggression. A USSTRATCOM analysis must consider Russian and Chinese key decision factors, both individually and together, and at various points of escalation. Specifically, the study should consider:

- Russian and Chinese national interests and their will to achieve them;
- Russian and Chinese strategy and plan for success, as well as their confidence in achieving their goals;
- What Russia and China each value that must be held at risk, as well as their pain threshold;
- The appropriate integrated deterrence framework required to address a two peer threat environment;
- Evaluating the sufficiency of existing capacity and future U.S. nuclear triad capabilities needed to sustain credible strategic deterrence against two peer adversaries;
- What capacity and capability improvements might be required for current and planned strategic deterrent systems

This analysis should consider how China and Russia might cooperate with one another, and how actions taken against one may have consequences with the other. Answering these questions will be necessary to determine how U.S. strategy should evolve.

7. Senator ERNST. General Cotton, with regard to deterrence requirements vis-à-vis China and Russia, in your personal opinion, what initial changes would you recommend to United States nuclear force levels, force structure, and force posture?

General COTTON. If confirmed, I intend to assess, evaluate, and provide an informed recommendation based on the study I described in the previous question. Any evaluation of the strategic deterrence portfolio must consider whether our force size and posture is sufficient to deter adversaries, assure allies and partners, and achieve U.S. objectives should deterrence fail.

TESTING

8. Senator ERNST. General Cotton, the Biden administration has repeatedly cancelled scheduled intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) tests. What effect could repeat cancellations have on testing and evaluation of parts or components of the Sentinel ground based strategic deterrent (GBSD) program? Please provide a classified response, if necessary.

General COTTON. To date, the cancellation and delayed flight tests have been for Minuteman III (MMIII). The DOD must ensure the availability of critical test data for MMIII sustainment efforts, and in turn modernization activities for Sentinel development.

In the future, the cancellation of Sentinel developmental test (DT) launches would reduce confidence in testing and have cascading effects to other Sentinel component, segment and system-level testing. Further, cancellation of a scheduled DT launch impacts the ability to validate both flight and ground system development, leading to extensive schedule realignments.

B-21 PROGRAM

9. Senator ERNST. General Cotton, are you aware of any complications regarding the B-21 program that could delay its initial operational capability? If so, please detail them. Please provide a classified response, if necessary.

General COTTON. The B-21 program remains on track to deliver combat capability within the acquisition program baseline. The lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to further inefficiencies with supply chain and workforce, and the Air Force is actively collaborating with its suppliers to mitigate any potential impacts.

RUSSIAN NUCLEAR ESCALATION

10. Senator ERNST. General Cotton, Putin has issued a number of nuclear threats to deter Western intervention in Ukraine. How do you evaluate the threat of Russia's theater nuclear escalation and how should the United States manage this risk?

General COTTON. Russia views its nuclear forces as necessary for maintaining deterrence and achieving its goals in a potential conflict against the United States and NATO, and views a credible nuclear deterrent as the ultimate guarantor of the Russian Federation. Russia is also expanding and modernizing its large and diverse set of nonstrategic systems, which are capable of delivering either nuclear or conventional warheads, because Moscow believes such systems offer options to deter adversaries, control the escalation of potential hostilities, and counter United States and Allied troops near its border.

I evaluate the reality of the Russian threat within the context of integrated deterrence. Integrated deterrence enables us to work in concert with our network of alliances and partnerships, across warfighting domains and theaters, and utilize all instruments of national power to achieve national objectives.

NUCLEAR-ARMED SEA-LAUNCHED CRUISE MISSILE (SLCM-N)

11. Senator ERNST. General Cotton, will you commit to briefing Members of this Committee your preliminary opinion regarding the SLCM-N program within 30 days of assuming command, if confirmed?

General COTTON. Yes. However, as I stated during my testimony, I would like the opportunity to conduct my own assessment of SLCM-N and its capabilities before providing any recommendations.

12. Senator ERNST. General Cotton, will you commit to providing your official recommendation to the Secretary of Defense regarding SLCM-N on the basis of independent military advice about the potential operational utility of the system, if confirmed?

General COTTON. Yes.

13. Senator ERNST. General Cotton, will you commit to transmitting in unclassified form to Members of this Committee your official recommendation to the Secretary of Defense regarding SLCM-N once provided, if confirmed?

General COTTON. Yes.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR THOM TILLIS

RISK MANAGEMENT

14. Senator TILLIS. General Cotton, as we discussed, two vital elements of successful modernization are the willingness to take risk and accept failure. How would you assess the strategy of "Fail Fast to Learn Faster"? In your personal opinion, to what extent should Congress and the Department of Defense (DOD) adopt this strategy and why?

General COTTON. Congress and the Department of Defense should pursue strategies that continually promote innovation and foster revolutionary technologies that ensure strategic advantage. I believe we can learn as much from failure as we can from success. To keep pace with our adversaries, we need to move rapidly and, if a new technology appears promising, acquire and field it quickly. If our experimentation shows it is not feasible, then we "fail fast" and move on. I believe Congress and DOD should adopt this strategy to the greatest extent possible. We need to understand risk is necessary to produce capabilities that support the National Defense Strategy goals and priorities through 2040.

STEADY, STABLE FUNDING

15. Senator TILLIS. General Cotton, as you know, Congress has failed to pass the National Defense Authorization Act on time in past years and will, again, delay passage this year. Can you elaborate on how Continuing Resolutions affect modernization and future operations?

General COTTON. Continuing resolutions (CRs) add uncertainty to research and development, production and delivery schedules, forcing increased levels of operational risk to meet strategic guidance. CRs also impact people, processes, decision making, and plans for multi-year programs, to include the ability to hire and retain qualified individuals.

If a CR is enacted, Congress can help by immediately granting anomalies for major DOD and National Nuclear Security Administration programs (at a minimum) to ensure subsystem new starts for already approved programs can commence and to keep modernization on track.

16. Senator TILLIS. General Cotton, specifically, what “new starts” or subsystems remain unfunded as a result of delayed DOD funding and how is this affecting our strategic deterrence capabilities?

General COTTON. Delayed DOD funding, as a result of continuing resolutions (CRs), disrupts funding streams, increases costs for multi-year programs, impacts research and development, delays contract awards, and hinders production and delivery schedules, creating uncertainty and waste.

Our nuclear modernization programs – delivery systems, warheads, and infrastructure – are tightly integrated and aligned. Replacement systems are projected to deliver just in time and any perturbation, including a CR, has detrimental and potentially cascading effects to USSTRATCOM’s ability to provide a fully integrated system to meet strategic deterrence objectives.

Thanks to Congressional attention and emphasis to our strategic modernization efforts, we are not aware of any programs or “new starts” that are unfunded at this time. However, requirements that would be impacted by a CR lasting through December include, Physical Security System - GBSD Squadrons, Minuteman Higher Authority Communications Test System (HACTS) 2.0, and MH-139A Performance Enhancement.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARSHA BLACKBURN

MINUTEMAN III

17. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, if confirmed, what would be your best military advice regarding delaying or canceling routine tests at the expense of the modernization of U.S. Forces?

General COTTON. If confirmed, my recommendation will be to maintain our regularly scheduled Minuteman III (MMIII) operational test launches as long as it remains in the operational force. The Air Force has sufficient capacity to test both legacy and developmental platforms.

18. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, what impact does even a small Minuteman III testing delay have on Sentinel?

General COTTON. Minuteman III operational testing has no impact on Sentinel development. However, impacts from Minuteman III testing delays are created by congested Western Range support assets, which consequently impacts a rigid Sentinel developmental testing program.

19. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, if confirmed, under what conditions would you recommend postponing or canceling a Sentinel developmental test?

General COTTON. Developmental testing is critical to fielding the Sentinel system on time. However, if the U.S. faced a situation where testing could somehow undermine strategic stability, I could accept that a Sentinel development flight test delay may be necessary, but would recommend against cancellation.

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

20. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, as the United States evaluates the current deterrence strategy to address both of our Great Power adversaries, what are the chief considerations that the Department of Defense and Department of Energy should highlight when evaluating the size and posture of the nuclear force?

General COTTON. If confirmed, I will assess and evaluate the size and posture of the nuclear force and make any appropriate recommendations to the Secretary as required. Any evaluation must consider whether the force size and posture is sufficient to deter adversaries, assure allies and partners, and achieve U.S. objectives.

21. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, if confirmed, can you commit to reporting to this Committee on the potential capability gap Nuclear-Armed Sea-Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM-N) may fill once you have assessed its strategic value and capabilities?

General COTTON. Yes.

INFRASTRUCTURE

22. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, if confirmed, what risk would you assume as STRATCOM Commander if recapitalization program funding for relevant National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) infrastructure modernization is decreased, and how would this affect your resourcing and requirements?

General COTTON. USSTRATCOM continually assesses operational risk to ensure they are fielding the appropriate stockpile to meet national leadership objectives, while being mindful of policy and resource constraints. The current stockpile is safe, secure and effective, but age and performance degradations exist. NNSA's production enterprise has atrophied following the end of the Cold War and has been underfunded for 3 decades. If the Nation continues to defer critical decisions to fully address these shortfalls, significant, near-term resource increases will be required to adequately mitigate operational risks associated with key stockpile and infrastructure capability shortfalls.

23. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, what is your understanding of the condition of the supporting weapons sustainment and production capabilities within NNSA?

General COTTON. The condition of the Nuclear Security Enterprise must remain a priority if we hope to address weapon production limitations and remain aligned with platform fielding. The NNSA has identified 12 critical capability gaps that affect every component needed for stockpile modernization. A modern stockpile, responsible infrastructure, and robust science and technology base is vital as our systems age beyond their useable lifetimes and the threat continues to grow.

NUCLEAR MODERNIZATION

24. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, how can the Department capitalize on working with the private sector to produce low-risk technologies and advanced cyber security measures to support modernization efforts?

General COTTON. The Department can capitalize on working with the private sector by identifying commercial technologies to provide DOD an operational advantage across the spectrum of conflict, leverage the speed of their incremental changes, and identifying commercial best practices within cybersecurity to integrate across a program's lifecycle, to include development, procurement, and operations. Integrating commercial best practices will result in the development of technologically advanced, highly modular, and easily upgradeable weapons systems which will ensure the United States' strategic forces remain safe, secure, and relevant through the end of the century.

MISSILE DEFENSE

25. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, active missile defense is an essential element of strategic deterrence. What lessons can we take from the hypersonic air-breathing weapon concept and apply them to the conventional prompt strike (CPS) capability?

General COTTON. The Department is actively pursuing hypersonic technology collaboration efforts across multiple programs. Hypersonic cruise missile and boost-glide programs are sharing information across areas with common components.

26. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, what other capabilities can STRATCOM incorporate to build a diverse missile defense architecture?

General COTTON. An integrated network of persistent sensors able to provide real-time detection, tracking, and targeting information is critical for leadership situational awareness, attribution, decision making, and response option selection. If confirmed, I will pursue efforts to integrate terrestrial and space-based sensors with kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities to address the increasing threats.

27. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, how can we work with Finland and Sweden to address current CPS challenges?

General COTTON. Until Finland and Sweden officially join NATO, the United States should work closely with them in a bilateral setting to address their security and defense concerns. After their accession to NATO, the United States should rely upon both bilateral and allied mechanisms to gain even deeper perspectives from Finland and Sweden to enhance their assurance and to more effectively deter a common adversary.

28. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, what lessons are we taking from Russia's implementation of hypersonics to bolster STRATCOM's strategy?

General COTTON. Hypersonic weapons can be used to achieve strategic, operational, or tactical effects depending on the target or objective. The DOD is developing hypersonic strike capabilities to address an immediate requirement for a highly responsive, long-range, non-nuclear strike capability to address distant, defended, and time-critical threats. If confirmed, I will ensure that USSTRATCOM is prepared to command and control any and all assigned hypersonic weapons.

29. Senator BLACKBURN. General Cotton, what challenges does STRATCOM face with the critical sensors required to identify and track hypersonic and ballistic missile tracking?

General COTTON. All Combatant Commands, including USSTRATCOM share the same challenge regarding critical sensors to identify and track hypersonic and ballistic missiles. The DOD is investing in a new space sensor and communications strategy that is funding the development of new intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities to provide better situational awareness and "buy-back" senior leader decision space. If confirmed, I will ensure that USSTRATCOM advocates for the quick development, deployment, and training with these new capabilities to have a force ready to meet these challenges.

[The nomination reference of General Anthony J. Cotton, USAF follows:]

NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT

PN2229

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
June 7, 2022.

Ordered, That the following nomination be referred to the Committee on Armed Services:

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To Be General

Gen. Anthony J. Cotton, 7136

_____, 2022.
(Date)

Reported by Mr. Reed _____
(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 General Anthony J. Cotton, USAF, which was transmitted to the Committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

	BIOGRAPHY	 UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
GENERAL ANTHONY J. COTTON		
Gen. Anthony J. Cotton is Commander, Air Force Global Strike Command and Commander, Air Forces Strategic–Air, U.S. Strategic Command, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. AFGSC provides strategic deterrence, global strike capability, and combat support to U.S. Strategic Command and other geographic combatant commands. The command is comprised of more than 33,700 professionals operating at two numbered air forces; 11 active duty, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve wings; and the Joint Global Strike Operations Center. Weapons systems assigned to AFGSC include all U.S. Air Force Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and bomber aircraft, UH-1N helicopters, E-4B National Airborne Operations Center aircraft, and the U.S. Air Force NC3 weapons system. Gen. Cotton entered the Air Force through the ROTC program in 1986 after earning a bachelor's degree in Political science from North Carolina State University in Raleigh. He has commanded at the squadron, group and wing levels. He served as Deputy Director of the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Air Force Executive Action Group, as Senior Military Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, Deputy Director of the National Reconnaissance Office, as well as Commander and President of Air University. He was also the Vice Commander and Commander of the 341st Missile Wing, Malmstrom AFB, Montana, and the Commander of the 45th Space Wing and Director of the Eastern Range, Patrick AFB, Florida. Prior to his current assignment, Gen. Cotton served as the Deputy Commander, AFGSC and Deputy Commander, Air Forces Strategic–Air, USSTRATCOM, Barksdale AFB, Louisiana. EDUCATION 1986 Bachelor of Science, Political Science, North Carolina State University, Raleigh 1991 Master of Science, Administration, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant 1992 Squadron Officer School, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala. 2001 Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala. 2005 U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. 2006 Enterprise Leadership Seminar, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill 2007 Phase II Professional Military Education, Joint Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Va. 2009 Senior Managers Course on National Security, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. 2014 AFSD 21 Executive Leadership Course, University of Tennessee, Knoxville 2017 Leadership Decision Making, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. 2018 Pinnacle Course, National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. 2018 The Harvard Seminar for New Presidents, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, Mass. 2018 Leadership at the Peak, Center for Creative Leadership, Colorado Springs, Colo. 2020 Combined Forces Air Component Commander Course, Maxwell AFB, Ala. ASSIGNMENTS 1. October 1986–July 1991, Missile Combat Crew Commander; Standardization/Evaluation Missile Combat Crew Commander; Chief, Standardization/Evaluation Operations/Procedures Branch and Wing Executive Officer, 91st Missile Wing, Minot Air Force Base, N.D. 2. July 1991–April 1994, Command Operations Evaluator 3901st Missile Evaluation Squadron and Chief of Protocol, 20th Air Force, Vandenberg AFB, Calif. 3. April 1994–April 1997, Space Surveillance Crew Commander, Flight Commander, Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station, Colo. 4. April 1997–January 1999, Chief, Space Surveillance Optical Section; Space Surveillance Program Element Monitor; and Executive Officer to the Director of Operations, Headquarters Air Force Space		
		EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION
		Second Lieutenant June 07, 1986 First Lieutenant June 07, 1988 Captain June 07, 1990 Major March 01, 1998 Lieutenant Colonel March 01, 2002 Colonel December 01, 2006 Brigadier General November 10, 2011 Major General July 06, 2015 Lieutenant General February 15, 2018 General August 27, 2021

Command, Peterson AFB, Colo.

5. January 1999–June 2000, Executive Officer to the Commander, 14th Air Force, Vandenberg AFB, Calif.

6. June 2000–June 2001, Student, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

7. June 2001–March 2004, Operations Officer, 45th Range Squadron; Commander, 3rd Space Launch Squadron; and Deputy Commander, 45th Operations Group, Patrick AFB, Fla.

8. March 2004–June 2005, Student, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

9. June 2005–March 2008, Deputy Director, Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Air Force Executive Action Group; Director, Preparation and Planning; and Senior Military Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va.

10. April 2008–July 2009, Commander, Space Operations Group, Aerospace Data Facility-East, Fort Belvoir, Va.

11. July 2009–May 2010, Vice Commander, 341st Missile Wing, Malmstrom AFB, Mont.

12. May 2010–August 2011, Commander, 341st Missile Wing, Malmstrom AFB, Mont.

13. August 2011–June 2013, Commander, 45th Space Wing, and Director, Eastern Range, Patrick AFB, Fla.

14. June 2013–November 2015, Deputy Director, National Reconnaissance Office, Chantilly, Va.

15. November 2015–January 2018, Commander, 20th Air Force, Air Force Global Strike Command, Francis E. Warren AFB, Wyo.

16. February 2018–October 2019, Commander and President, Air University, Air Education and Training Command, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

17. October 2019–August 2021, Deputy Commander, Air Force Global Strike Command, and Deputy Commander, Air Forces Strategic–Air, U.S. Strategic Command, Barksdale AFB, La.

18. August 2021–present, Commander, Air Force Global Strike Command, and Commander, Air Forces Strategic–Air, U.S. Strategic Command, Barksdale AFB, La.

SUMMARY OF JOINT ASSIGNMENTS

1. March 2006–June 2007, Director, Preparation and Planning; and Senior Military Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., as a colonel

2. June 2007–April 2008, Senior Military Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., as a colonel

3. April 2008–July 2009, Commander, Space Operations Group, Aerospace Data Facility-East, Fort Belvoir, Va. (National Reconnaissance Office), as a colonel

MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Distinguished Service Medal with oak leaf cluster

Defense Superior Service Medal with oak leaf cluster

Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster

Defense Meritorious Service Medal

Meritorious Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters

Air Force Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster

Air Force Achievement Medal with oak leaf cluster

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with oak leaf cluster

Combat Readiness Medal with oak leaf cluster

National Defense Service Medal with device

Global War on Terrorism Service Medal

National Reconnaissance Office Medal of Distinguished Performance

(Current as of August 2021)



[The Committee on Armed Services requires certain senior military officers nominated 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 General Anthony J. Cotton, USAF in connection with his nomination follows:]

117th CONGRESS, 2021 – 2022
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
ROOM SR-228
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-6050

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE QUESTIONNAIRE
INFORMATION REQUESTED OF NOMINEES
FOR CERTAIN SENIOR MILITARY POSITIONS

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): Anthony J. Cotton
2. Position to which nominated: Commander, United States Strategic Command
3. Date of nomination: 7 June 2022
4. 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 the service record extract provided to the Committee by the applicable agency/department/board): N/A
5. 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): N/A

6. 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): see attached
7. Honors and awards (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements, in addition to those listed in the service record extract and biographical provided to the Committee by the agency or department): 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.

8. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate Committees of Congress? Yes.
9. Do you agree, if confirmed, and when asked before this Committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate Committees of Congress to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the position of the Administration? Yes.
10. 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.
11. 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.

12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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-E 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-E 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.



ANTHONY J. COTTON
General, USAF

This 7th day of June, 2022 .

[The nomination of General Anthony J. Cotton, USAF was reported to the Senate by Chairman Reed on September 22, 2022, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on September 29, 2022.]

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