

THE NOMINATIONS OF: THE HONORABLE DEREK
H. CHOLLET TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF
DEFENSE FOR POLICY AND MS. CARA L. ABER-
CROMBIE TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

Printed for the use of the Committee on Armed Services



Available via: <http://www.govinfo.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

WASHINGTON : 2026

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CONTENTS

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

	Page
THE NOMINATIONS OF: THE HONORABLE DEREK H. CHOLLET TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY AND MS. CARA L. ABERCROMBIE TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION	1
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
Reed, Senator Jack	1
Wicker, Senator Roger F.	3
WITNESS STATEMENTS	
Chollet, The Honorable Derek H., to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy	4
Advance Policy Questions	56
Questions for the Record	103
Nomination Reference and Report	156
Biographical Sketch	157
Committee on Armed Services Questionnaire	160
Signature Page	165
Abercrombie, Ms. Cara L., to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition	7
Advance Policy Questions	165
Questions for the Record	188
Nomination Reference and Report	200
Biographical Sketch	201
Committee on Armed Services Questionnaire	203
Signature Page	208

This hearing is printed to include all available information
requested or required to be inserted for the record.

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:31 a.m., in room SD-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, Manchin, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, and Schmitt.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Chairman REED. Good morning. The Committee meets to consider the nomination of Mr. Derek Chollet to be Under Secretary of Defense of Policy and Ms. Cara Abercrombie to be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition.

I would like to thank the nominees for their service to the United States and their willingness to assume these important roles.

I would also like to welcome the guests and family members who are here today. Mr. Chollet, I welcome your wife Heather and children Lucas and Erin.

Ms. Abercrombie, I welcome your husband David, your mother Michelle and father Scott. I also want to recognize your daughter, Audrey, who I know is very proud of her mother.

The Committee is grateful to your families for their continued support of your service.

Mr. Chollet, you have been nominated for a critical position in the Department of Defense. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy serves as a principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense, leading the creation and coordination of national security policy within the department.

You are well qualified for this role, having served in a number of key leadership positions in the Pentagon, the State Department, and the National Security Council. I would like to know how your interagency experience including your current role as counselor at the State Department has prepared you for this role.

If confirmed you would lead defense policy at a consequential time. There is a common understanding that the future of our national security is tied to the success of our competition with China.

This competition is occurring across every field of national power—military, economic, political, technological, and more—in, of course, every region of the world. To maintain our edge the Department of Defense must dedicate urgent and sustained attention to each of these efforts.

In particular, United States defense leaders must evolve the way we compete with China. The Department of Defense has long built its competitive mindset around the idea of winning in an armed conflict and deterring China through military dominance.

That may no longer be enough. The game has changed and our capacity for outright victory through military strength should not be our only measure of success. The Defense Department needs to better understand how China is competing, develop new tools for competition, and integrate our activities with those of our allies and partners.

Mr. Chollet, I would ask for your views on how the department should pursue these efforts.

We also are in the midst of the greatest test of the NATO alliance since World War II. Throughout the war in Ukraine a formidable number of our allies have joined together to support Ukraine on the battlefield and impose cost on Russia.

We are at a pivotal moment in the war and I would like to know your views on the United States military posture in Europe and how the United States and our allies should regard the global security environment, moving forward.

Indeed, all of our potential adversaries including China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are seeking ways to win without fighting against the United States.

The department recently published its Joint Concept for competing, which asserts that strategic competition is, I quote, “an enduring condition to be managed, not a problem to be solved.”

I would ask for your opinion or how this should push the department to pursue every available opportunity to advance our national interest including through smart investments in infrastructure and technology.

Ms. Abercrombie, you are nominated to be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition. If confirmed, you would serve as the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, advising the under secretary on the defense acquisition system, acquisition policy, and contracting.

You bring an extensive record of government service to this role including decades of leadership experience throughout the Department of Defense.

I would like to know how your background has prepared you for this position and how it would inform your approach to defense acquisition.

If confirmed, one of your highest priorities must be streamlining and expediting the acquisition process. We need to field equipment to our warfighters quickly while also ensuring acquisitions remain on budget.

Although some progress has been made in recent years, the department acquisition process still remains on the Government Accountability Office's high-risk list. I would like to know how you plan to implement acquisition policy reforms such as the adaptive acquisition framework to speed up the process.

Finally, in order for the department to more effectively acquire defense weapon systems you will be responsible for improving the data available to the department.

This should include securing access to the necessary data rights or intellectual property as well as better understanding cost, pricing, and contractual data.

Ms. Abercrombie, I would like to know how you would plan to address each of these issues.

Thank you again to our nominees. Let me now recognize the ranking member, Senator Wicker.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER F. WICKER

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Today we are here to consider two positions that are among those supported in the Department of Defense. I want to welcome you, Ms. Abercrombie, as well as your family, and also welcome Mr. Chollet and your wife and children. Glad to have you here today.

It is worth setting some context as we begin this hearing. Recently, the Marine Corps commandant, General Eric Smith, noted that our country is in something of an interwar period.

He is right, and if we continue our current course we risk transforming this moment from an interwar period to a pre-war period. I think we need to act and act quickly to prevent a war.

As we face a growing threat from communist China we need to pursue a policy of peace through strength. Strength.

Unfortunately, when it comes to addressing our deterrence gaps the current administration demonstrates a lack of urgency. It was President George H. W. Bush who said when it comes to national defense finishing second means finishing last.

I agree with the former president and right now we are finishing last when it comes to the military balance in the Western Pacific. So we must act quickly.

Ms. Abercrombie, you have been nominated to the post of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition. You have had decades of experience in the Pentagon to prepare yourself for this position.

I hope I can receive your commitment to work together to accelerate many of our most important procurement programs. For example, we need to work together on Harpoon anti-ship missiles. So let us talk about that.

Mr. Chollet, you have been nominated to serve as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, the third-ranking position in the department. You will advise the Secretary on some of our most sensitive national defense matters and you will apprise Congress of the department's work.

Mr. Chollet, the recent Under Secretary of Defense for Policy recently deflected House and Senate oversight efforts, made partisan comments unbecoming of his station, and demonstrated low regard for the authorities under the Constitution of the legislative branch.

Many of his patterns of conduct were foreseeable, given his public record. The Senate Republican Conference subsequently voted against his confirmation. Members on my side of the aisle have many questions still unanswered from his tenure.

Mr. Chollet, I would like you to articulate what you understand your relationship with Congress ought to be and how you intend to repair the degraded relations with Congress, particularly on this side of the aisle.

The important post to which you have been nominated requires someone with discretion and sound professional judgment.

Mr. Chollet, you exhibit an indisputably impressive record of public service. Yet, I need to note that you have also made several comments in the past that cause me some concern and I hope you can clarify them for me today.

You have trivialized the situation on our southern border. You claim that the institutional military is infected by systemic racism and you have suggested that our decision to leave Afghanistan was strategically sound, and these are just some of the disturbing comments.

As this process moves forward senators are going to have to consider whether these views are appropriate. Many senior general and flag officers have told this Committee we are in the most dangerous moment since World War II.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss these comments with you in more detail and receive a full accounting of your views and qualifications.

But for now, thank you both for being here and we look forward to hearing your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Mr. Chollet, you are recognized for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DEREK H. CHOLLET, TO BE
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY**

Mr. CHOLLET. Well, thank you, Chairman Reed and Ranking Member—

Chairman REED. Bring that microphone as close as possible.

Mr. CHOLLET. Ranking Member Wicker and distinguished Members of the Committee, I really appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today.

I would like to thank President Biden for my nomination and Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks for their confidence in me.

I would also like to thank Secretary of State Blinken and all of my teammates at the Department of State for being such terrific colleagues over the last two and a half years and for all they do every day around the world on behalf of the American people.

But most importantly, I would like to thank my family without whom I would not be here today and that starts, of course, with my parents, who are watching from home in Nebraska, to my brother and sister to my terrific in-laws.

But most important, of course, I owe my greatest thanks to the family that is with me here today: my son Lucas, my daughter Erin, and my wife Heather Hostetter. They inspire me every day.

They have given me their full support and made so many sacrifices as I have pursued this career of public service. Quite simply, I could not do this without them.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, there is no more sacred mission than that of the U.S. Department of Defense to keep Americans safe and to protect our interests abroad.

I am deeply humbled at the prospect of returning to the Pentagon to work with the inspiring men and women of our armed forces. As the administration's National Security Strategy makes clear, we are living in a decisive decade. This is a moment as challenging and complex as any we have faced in our modern history.

Foremost among those challenges is the pacing threat posed by the People's Republic of China, the one country today with both the intent and the growing capability to remake the world order that we helped create.

At the same time we must also address what the National Defense Strategy correctly calls is the acute threat posed by Putin's aggressive Russia.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, if confirmed I will continue this administration's work to provide military support to Ukraine and rally the world for Ukraine's self-defense.

This has been an unprecedented effort in which Congress has been an indispensable partner. But as we all heard last week from President Zelensky during his visit here to Washington our work is not yet over.

We also must remain vigilant against persistent threats posed by countries like North Korea and Iran, supporting diplomacy by maintaining a robust deterrence, working with allies and partners, and being prepared to take action when necessary to protect our troops and defend our interests.

Our forces must be as modern and capable as possible. That means having an urgency to invest and innovate, whether that is ensuring that our undersea warfighting capability remains second to none or continuing to lead on AI.

It also means having a safe, reliable, and effective nuclear deterrent, investing in our triad so it remains robust and credible in the eyes of both our adversaries and our allies.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, to be successful in meeting these and so many other challenges we must work together. Inside the executive branch that means the Defense and State Departments working hand in hand as one team to marry force and diplomacy, which given my experience in both buildings I believe I can help do.

Inside the Pentagon that means working closely with the Joint Staff, the combatant commands, our service chiefs, and all of our warfighters to get them what they need and to make the best possible decisions.

But no less important working together means forging a close partnership with all of you on this Committee and the Congress as a whole. I have long admired this Committee's bipartisan commitment to our national security and its thoughtful and forward thinking oversight of our military.

Throughout my career I have tried to live up to this example of bipartisanship in our national security. It is an example set by the

two Secretaries of Defense in which I previously worked, Secretary Panetta and Secretary Hagel, and I know it is a priority for Secretary Austin today.

I am proud and humbled to have received the public support from nearly three dozen senior national security professionals who have served in the past four Republican administrations. These are former bosses, mentors, colleagues, and friends of mine.

So, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, you have my word that if confirmed I will treat you as the full partner that you need to be, to be straight with you, to be accessible, to be responsive in a timely manner, and to be as transparent as I can possibly be, all in our common effort to meet our shared objectives to make this country safe, secure, and prosperous.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of The Honorable Derek H. Chollet follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE DEREK H. CHOLLET

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, distinguished Members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I want to thank President Biden for my nomination; and Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks for their confidence in me. I also want to thank Secretary of State Blinken and the entire leadership team of the State Department for being such terrific colleagues over the past two and a half years, and to express my gratitude to all my State Department teammates who work tirelessly everyday around the world on behalf of the American people.

Most of all, I would like to thank my family, without whom I would not be here today. That includes my parents, who are watching from back home in Nebraska, my brother and sister, and my terrific in-laws. But I owe my greatest thanks to my family sitting behind me—Lucas, Aerin, and my wife, Heather Hostetter—who inspire me every day, have given me their full support and put up with so many sacrifices as I've pursued a career of public service.

This is a rewarding profession, but it is not always an easy one, and quite simply I could not do this without them.

Mr. Chairman, there is no more sacred mission than that of the U.S. Department of Defense—to keep Americans safe and to advance our interests abroad.

I am humbled at the prospect of returning to the Pentagon to work with the inspiring men and women of our Armed Forces.

As the Administration's National Security Strategy makes clear, we are living in a decisive decade.

This is a moment as complex and demanding as any we have faced in our modern history—and it is a moment very different from the one in which I began my career in Washington three decades ago.

Foremost of those changes is the pacing threat posed by the People's Republic of China—the one country today with the intent and growing capability to remake the world order we helped create. Meeting this challenge will require patience and persistence, creativity, investments in our critical capabilities; agile plans and concepts; and an ironclad commitment to allies and partners across the globe.

We also must address what the National Defense Strategy accurately describes as the acute threat presented by Putin's aggressive Russia.

If confirmed, I will continue this Administration's work to provide military assistance and rally the world in support of Ukraine's self-defense—this has been an unprecedented effort in which Congress has been an essential partner. But our work is far from over.

We must also remain vigilant against the persistent threats of North Korea and Iran—supporting diplomacy by maintaining robust deterrence, working with allies and partners, and remaining prepared to take action to defend our troops and interests when necessary.

We must ensure our forces are as modern and capable as possible. I share this Committee's commitment to a safe, reliable, and effective nuclear deterrent, and thank you for your leadership in this effort. Modernization is key to maintaining this deterrent—and if confirmed, I will ensure the nuclear triad remains robust and credible in the eyes of both our adversaries and our allies.

Mr. Chairman, to be successful in meeting these and many other challenges, we need to work together.

Inside the executive branch, that means the Defense and State Departments working hand-in-glove as one team to bring together diplomacy and force—which given my experience in both buildings, I believe I can help do.

Inside the Pentagon, that means working closely with the Joint Staff, the Service Chiefs, and the Combatant Commands and all our warfighters—to make the best possible decisions and to get them what they need.

But no less important, working together means forging a partnership with all of you on this Committee and the Congress as a whole. I have long admired this Committee's bipartisan commitment to the defense of our Nation and its thoughtful and forward-thinking oversight of our military.

Throughout my career I have tried to live up to this example of bipartisanship in our national security. It is an example set by the two Secretaries of Defense I worked for during my previous time in Pentagon, Secretary Panetta and Secretary Hagel. And I know it is a priority for Secretary Austin today.

I am proud and humbled to have received the public support from nearly three dozen senior national security professionals from the past four Republican administrations—former bosses, mentors, colleagues and friends—for this position.

Mr. Chairman, Members of this Committee: you have my word that, if confirmed, I will treat you as the full partner you need to be—to be straight with you, to be accessible, to be responsive in a timely manner, and to be as transparent as I can possibly be—all in our common effort to meet our shared objectives to make this country safe, secure and prosperous.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman REED. Ms. Abercrombie, please?

STATEMENT OF MS. CARA L. ABERCROMBIE, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Good morning, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and distinguished Members of the Committee. It is an honor to appear before you this morning.

I am humbled and grateful to have been nominated by President Biden to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition. I greatly appreciate the trust that he, Secretary Austin, Deputy Secretary Hicks, and Under Secretary LaPlante have placed in me, and thank you for your consideration of my nomination.

I would also like to thank the Committee for your tradition of bipartisan support for the Defense Department in this decisive decade when the United States must—military must deter further Russian aggression as well as an increasingly capable People's Republic of China, all while mitigating and protecting against threats from Iran, North Korea, and violent extremist organizations. Continued bipartisan support is essential.

I would also like to take a moment to thank my family, whose love and support have carried me to this moment. My parents, who are here today, both instilled in my brother and me the spirit of service from a young age.

I would like to thank my brother, who retired from the Army this year. He has been a source of inspiration throughout my career.

Most of all, I want to thank my husband, David, who is here today, and our daughter Audrey for their steadfast love and encouragement to go for the challenging jobs even when it has meant sacrifice at home.

I would also like to thank the many mentors who have helped guide me over the course of my career and the distinguished public servants I have had the privilege to work alongside at the National Security Council and in the Department of Defense.

I joined the Department of Defense as a Presidential management fellow 20 years ago with no expectation I would stay more than a few years. But the sense of mission and purpose, particularly in the shadows of the 9/11 attacks, pulled me in and it is this sense of mission that motivates me to pursue this position in acquisition.

Acquisition policy has always been extremely important to the department's function but has taken on greater significance in today's dynamic security environment as warfighting has expanded into newer domains like space and cyber with innovation moving at an increasingly rapid clip and with new technologies being developed by nontraditional sources. We cannot be satisfied with business as usual.

We no longer can wait decades to bring programs to fruition. Our ability to deliver capability to the warfighter rapidly is absolutely critical to ensuring the United States military remains the finest fighting force in the world, and as the nature of warfighting evolves so must our acquisition policy become more agile, more responsive, and able to procure new capabilities from a variety of suppliers.

I believe my two decades of government service have prepared me well for this position. I have served in multiple senior roles in the department, building and leading teams to tackle a diverse range of issues from deepening defense partnerships in Asia to re-vamping management of the security cooperation workforce.

In my current capacity at the National Security Council I have worked closely with leaders across the department helping translate Presidential national security policy objectives into concrete actions.

I have a deep understanding of defense strategy and policy and the outcomes we need our acquisition policy to achieve. In my years of working with our military as well as the militaries of our allies and partners I have seen firsthand how the limitations of our acquisition system and of our Defense Industrial Base, such as severe barriers to entry for nontraditional suppliers, supply chain and production delays, and workforce recruitment, retention and training challenges create complications not only in getting capability to ourselves but to the partners we need to fight alongside us.

I have an intimate knowledge of the department and its processes and a proven track record of working with and across department components to get things done, meeting objectives within defined timelines.

If confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition I will bring to bear this expertise, my personal credibility with stakeholders across the department, and the leadership and management experience to head the talented OSD acquisitions team and ensure it evolves and adapts policies and practices to support not only the warfighter of today but the warfighter of the future.

I commit to this Committee that I will ensure the Department of Defense embraces flexibility, adopts new approaches to enable speed and scale, bringing the best capability to the warfighter from a diverse range of providers, all while maintaining good oversight and transparency and providing value to the U.S. taxpayer.

Chairman Reed, I pledge to do this in close partnership with stakeholders, if confirmed, with the Committee across the department and certainly with our industry partners as well.

If confirmed I pledge to work closely with this Committee to maintain open lines of communication and to provide the transparency that you require to exercise your oversight.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Abercrombie follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MS. CARA L. ABERCROMBIE

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, it's an honor to appear before you today. I am humbled and grateful to have been nominated by President Biden to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition. I greatly appreciate the trust he, Secretary Austin, and Under Secretary LaPlante have placed in me. Thank you for your consideration of my nomination.

I would also like to thank the Committee for your tradition of bipartisan support for the Defense Department. In this "decisive decade," when the United States military must deter further Russian aggression as well as an increasingly capable People's Republic of China, while mitigating and protecting against threats from Iran, North Korea and violent extremist organizations, continued bipartisan support is essential.

I would like to take a moment to thank my family, whose love and support have carried me to this moment. My parents, who are here today, both instilled in my brother and me the spirit of service from a young age. My brother, who retired from the Army this year, has been a source of inspiration. Most of all, I want to thank my husband who is here today, and our daughter for their steadfast love and encouragement to go for the challenging jobs, even when it has meant sacrifice at home. I would also like to thank the many mentors who have helped guide me over the course of my career, including Deputy Secretary Hicks, who was my first boss in the Pentagon.

I joined the Department of Defense as a Presidential Management Fellow 20 years ago with no expectation I would stay more than a few years. But the sense of mission and purpose—particularly in the shadows of the 9/11 attacks—drew me in. And it is this sense of mission that motivates me to pursue this transition to acquisition. Acquisition policy has always been important, but has taken on greater significance in today's dynamic security environment. As warfighting has expanded into new domains like space and cyber, with innovation moving at an increasingly rapid clip and with new technologies being developed by non-traditional sources, we cannot be satisfied with business as usual. We no longer can wait decades to bring programs to fruition.

Our ability to deliver capability to the warfighter—rapidly—is absolutely essential to ensuring the United States military remains the finest fighting force in the world. As the nature of warfighting evolves, so must our acquisition policy become more agile, more responsive, and able to procure new capabilities from a variety of providers.

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If confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, I will bring to bear this expertise, my personal credibility with stakeholders across the Depart-

ment, and the leadership and management experience to head the talented OSD Acquisitions team, and ensure it evolves and adapts policies and practices to support not only the warfighter of today, but the warfighter of the future. I will commit my all to ensuring the Department of Defense embraces flexibility, adopts new approaches to enable speed and scale, bringing the best capability to the warfighter from a diverse range of suppliers, all while maintaining good oversight and transparency, and providing value to the U.S. tax-payer. I will do so in close partnership with stakeholders across the Department, with industry, and with Congress.

I pledge to work closely with this Committee, to maintain open lines of communication, and to provide the transparency you need to exercise oversight.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much.

I have a series of standard questions for all nominees. You may respond together appropriately. Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[Witnesses answer in the negative.]

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?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Chairman REED. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chollet, we are engaged in supporting the government of Ukraine and work for them and I think for us is an existential conflict. The administration did a remarkable job in assembling a strong worldwide coalition but particularly NATO.

What would be the impact if we began to cutoff funding to Ukraine, both to the Ukrainians and to our alliance?

Mr. CHOLLET. Chairman Reed, thank you for the question and thank you for the time you gave me the other day in your office. I enjoyed the discussion.

The impact if the United States were to stop providing significant support to Ukraine would be devastating. It would be devastating, first and foremost, to Ukraine, which is putting good use of the assistance we are providing them but also to this very, very impressive alliance that has been formed over the last 20 months.

Fifty some countries are contributing in some way to the effort in Ukraine and these are countries not just from Europe. These are countries all around the world that are providing some form of military assistance.

We are leading by example. We are doing the most, thanks to Congress' strong support here, and so I think it is absolutely vital that we maintain our robust assistance to Ukraine.

Chairman REED. Thank you.

Ms. Abercrombie, sort of working backward, particularly in the Indo-Pacific we could have situations where we have equipment that needs to be repaired but the prospect of getting civilian contractors into islands in the Philippines is not that feasible, which drives me to the point I would like to make is that we have to be able to fix those types of equipment in very difficult circumstances.

That means we need the intellectual property, we need the data, which the companies now routinely keep, and I think also you might comment on whether this would help us with respect to sustainment costs if the work is being done by military personnel and not exclusively by contractors. Go ahead.

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Chairman Reed, thanks for raising this very important question and thank you for the time in your office last week.

So I agree, intellectual property rights are something that the department must take a new approach to. It is different than we have done in the past and I do believe that the department is moving in the right direction.

But if confirmed, Senator, what I would pledge to do is make sure the workforce is taking adequate—making adequate use of the flexible acquisition policies that we do have in place for software acquisition to make sure we are building that discussion in from the beginning of the contracting process.

I also think there is a way to work in partnership with industry to make sure we can have that IP access to do just precisely what you have suggested, which is to give the warfighter access in the field in the time of need without infringing upon industries' investments in the intellectual property itself.

Chairman REED. Thank you.

One of the senses I have is that the COCOMs have really specific graphic information about what they need. In your role will you stay in close contact with the COCOMs?

In fact, some of them have resources to develop systems that might be very effective if it is deployed throughout the service. Will you maintain that kind of close cooperation?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Senator, yes, if confirmed I think it is my duty to make sure I have got good connections with all the sources of innovation across the department including the COCOMs.

Chairman REED. Thank you.

Mr. Chollet, China is the pacing threat. Taiwan is the most significant issue, among many, that divides us. Our strategy so far has been deemed strategic ambiguity.

People have suggested we abandon that and declare much more forcefully and explicitly our commitment to Taiwan. Avril Haines before has commented that this would be deeply destabilizing and would solidify Chinese perceptions that the United States is bent on constraining their rise and produce more aggressive behavior. What is your sort of take on that?

Mr. CHOLLET. Thank you, Chairman Reed.

I agree with the DNI on the importance of strategic ambiguity. It has served us quite well for several decades now as we have worked to provide critical military support to Taiwan guided by the Taiwan Relations Act.

I should say that this is an area where Congress has been a leader since 1979 and the passage of the Taiwan Relations Act.

So, if confirmed, I would look forward to working with all of you to ensure that we are doing whatever we can to provide support to Taiwan because the freedom of that democracy is absolutely critical to our interests.

Chairman REED. I have just a few seconds left so this may be more of a comment than a question. But there is a very difficult dynamic going on to the extent that we buildup Taiwan and it looks as if it becomes more and more impregnable it might force the Chinese to do something dramatic and aggressive.

How do you ensure to balance that very difficult dynamic?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is a very difficult dynamic but I think the facts show that the PRC is building up capability at a very alarming rate to threaten Taiwan. It is important for the United States to work with Taiwan to maintain deterrence across the Taiwan Strait and if confirmed that will be one of my missions.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much.

Senator Wicker, please?

Senator WICKER. Thank you very much. I will try to cover a lot of things.

Ms. Abercrombie, more than \$44 billion had been appropriated for weapons to support Ukraine since the start of the conflict a year and a half ago. Yet, a recent factsheet shows that 62 percent of the funds have not even been put on contract.

Do you think this is correct and, if confirmed, will you take steps to clear this backlog as soon as possible?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Senator Wicker, thank you for your question and thank you for the time in your office last week.

If confirmed, Senator, I will absolutely commit to you that I will focus on ensuring we are contracting using all the funds that Congress has appropriated for the Ukraine backfill effort and for Ukraine itself and getting those on contract.

My understanding in speaking with the Department of the Army is that they have at least a 60 percent contracted rate, going forward. But, Senator, I pledge to look into that, if confirmed, across all the services.

Senator WICKER. I hope we can solve that.

A few—I understand from our experts that a few hundred Harpoons on Taiwan could significantly blunt Chinese amphibious advances. But the contracting timeline for Harpoons have been far too long and senior leadership has not exerted any pressure to fix this problem.

How can we fix this problem? Do you agree that just a few hundred Harpoons would be a significant help to Taiwan?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Senator, my understanding based on prior positions is that, indeed, Harpoons would be a very effective weapon system for Taiwan and agree with you that the contracting process has taken far too long.

If confirmed I pledge to take a hard look at the FMS programs with Taiwan and look at ways we can shorten the contracting timelines through conversations with industry as well as with the partner and take a look at foreign military sales improvement overall.

Senator WICKER. Okay. I hope you will get back to us quickly on that and I will make that specific request—

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Absolutely.

Senator WICKER.—in writing for this hearing.

Now, Mr. Chollet, you and I had a very nice conversation, too. You had a role in—with the State Department with regard to the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Is that correct?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, again, thanks again for the time the other day. I really appreciated the conversation.

As a senior adviser to Secretary Blinken I am sort of a utility infielder for the secretary. So during the evacuation it was an all hands on deck exercise and I did whatever I could to try to solve problems, which included working mainly with our allies and partners as we were coordinating this multinational effort of the evacuation.

Senator WICKER. In an interview with George Stephanopoulos the President said, and I quote, “If there is American citizens left we are going to stay and get them out.” The question was would U.S. troops stay beyond August 31st if there were still Americans to evacuate. The President’s response was in the affirmative.

When did you realize that the President was not going to do this?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, thanks for the question. My memory is that the President received a unanimous recommendation from his advisors to have all of our troops out by August 31st, which is, of course, several months after the original May 1st deadline to have all of our troops out under the Doha Agreement. That said—

Senator WICKER. That, in fact, did not happen.

Mr. CHOLLET. Sorry, sir. That said, all of our work to get the people out of Afghanistan who had wanted to leave and it was 120,000 during the evacuation in August 2021. It has been in the neighborhood of 15,000 since then and that is in a situation where the United States does not have a presence on the ground. There is no embassy, there is no Americans there, and it has been a very intensive effort to get those who served alongside with us out of Afghanistan.

Senator WICKER. Okay. Well, the fact is—and I would like for you to supplement your answer on the record, please, sir—the President did in fact withdraw all U.S. troops without evacuating

all of the Americans who wanted to leave. So I will ask you to supplement that answer on the record.

Did you say in response to an Associated Press quote about the southern border, quote, that “this is a security threat is preposterous and not supported by the evidence,” unquote? Did you say that?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator Wicker, I do not recall that comment. But what I can tell you is I believe that we need to have a safe and secure border. We are not there yet.

The Defense Department plays a critical supporting role to the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection. I know Secretary Austin just recently has augmented the troops down to help assist with the southern border, and so if confirmed that is something I would continue to work on.

Senator WICKER. Okay. So you—at least now you do believe that the situation on the southern border is a security threat and you—that you at DOD now will have a specific role to counter the cartels there on the southern border?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, yes. What I believe is the DOD plays a critical supporting role to other agencies and State and local partners in helping secure that border. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure that it plays that role.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Senator Shaheen, please?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Congratulations, Mr. Chollet, Ms. Abercrombie. Excuse me. Congratulations on your nomination. Thank you to both of you and your families for your willingness to continue to serve this country.

Mr. Chollet, I really have appreciated your engagement in the Western Balkans during your time at the Department of State. It is not lost on me that another conflict in Europe at this time would be particularly problematic, and I know that you were very important in helping to bring Kosovo and Serbia to the table to try and address the conflict between those two countries, and part of ensuring that peace in the region is NATO’s KFOR force and I wonder if you could talk about how you see working with General Cavoli and United States European Command to ensure that KFOR both has the resources that it needs and looks at whether there needs to be an expanded mission, given the recent violence in the northern part of Kosovo.

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator Shaheen, thank you again for the question. Thank you for all of your leadership in this effort because the engagement of the Congress in the Western Balkans has been absolutely critical to our overall efforts.

Unfortunately, the situation across the Western Balkans remains very unstable. As you know, we both had the opportunity to see the Bosnian foreign minister a few days ago, who said to me we need to be worried about a Russian bear being in the belly of Europe.

Instability in the Western Balkans would not stay in the Western Balkans and so that is why it is important for all of us to work to see that we can bring lasting peace to that region.

The situation in Kosovo and Serbia has been troubling for some time and there was another flare up of violence over the weekend.

I spoke just a few days ago with the president of Serbia as well as the prime minister of Kosovo to try to tamp down some of those tensions.

But the important role that the Defense Department plays in supporting KFOR—the NATO mission in Kosovo which is helping to keep the peace in northern Kosovo—is absolutely essential.

So, if confirmed, I would work with General Cavoli and the entire EUCOM family as well as our NATO partners to ensure that we are doing what we need to have enough capability so that KFOR can help keep the peace in this critical part of the world.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. As we think about the need for other peacekeeping forces in the Balkans, obviously, the EUFOR mission is very important in Bosnia Herzegovina and they are coming up on another reauthorization that needs to happen at the U.N. at the end of October.

Can you talk about the prospects for that reauthorization?

Mr. CHOLLET. Sure. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

I had the opportunity to speak with the Bosnian foreign minister about this the other day. I think the prospects are looking better, although we are not there yet. We still have some time before that authorization will happen.

Last year it was a close run thing and so I can tell you that from the State Department perspective right now we are working hard to ensure that that EUFOR mandate gets expanded or gets renewed in Bosnia.

Thinking about, if confirmed, the Defense Department angle it is to ensure that we are doing whatever we can from a DOD perspective to ensure that we are trying to keep the peace in Bosnia.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, and as the foreign minister pointed out, if EUFOR fails then NATO would be a last resort, which I assume would not be something that some of the elements in Bosnia Herzegovina would be interested in seeing.

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, that is absolutely right.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Ms. Abercrombie, you have talked about the challenge of balancing the commercial technology services that are available and the department's need to use those.

One of those efforts that got a lot of attention was Starlink's role in the Ukraine war. So how can we—how can we ensure that if there are commercial contracts with the department that the decisions made about how those services are used are based on policy that the department and this country believe are in the best interests of the department, not in the best interests of a commercial entity?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Senator Shaheen, if confirmed my first priority is looking after the American warfighter and absolutely I think going into the contracting process, baking that in from the get go, is absolutely necessary and this is an evolving environment where we are working more closely with commercial providers and that is a discussion we need to have upfront and to be mindful of the requirements we have going into the conversation with industry.

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

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Fischer, please?

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ms. Abercrombie and Mr. Chollet, and your families for stepping forward to continue to serve your country. I appreciate that.

Mr. Chollet, China remains the pacing threat that we face, and do you believe that the department is appropriately postured to meet that threat?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator Fischer, thanks for the question and thanks for the time the other day in your office. I really appreciated the conversation.

I know that the Defense Department is working hard at getting at that threat. If confirmed, one of the first things I will do on the job is open up the hood and make my own assessment of how we are doing. But I know that there has been a tremendous amount of investment and energy put into this.

But the PRC, as you said, is rapidly innovating and modernizing and that is why it is the pacing challenge we face for this century.

Senator FISCHER. How do you believe the department should balance the readiness that is needed today with the modernization that we have to look for in the long term?

Mr. CHOLLET. Thanks for the question.

We have to have the urgency to innovate and invest and we need to ensure that we are investing in the future. So it is a very difficult balancing act.

It is one that will be foremost on my mind if confirmed in this position because, of course, we have the threats of today that are very urgent and complex but even more concerning the threats of tomorrow.

Senator FISCHER. How do you think the department should prioritize those investments?

Mr. CHOLLET. Well, I think it is—in some ways it is going to be case by case because it is going to be balancing risk across regions, across priorities.

My sense from looking at it from the outside across the river over the last several years is it has been balancing it relatively effectively thanks to the cooperation and support and the leadership of many in the Congress.

I think in the Indo-Pacific, for example, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative has been a very great innovation and I am glad the Defense Department has invested so much in its recent budget for PDI.

Senator FISCHER. How much risk—how much risk would you be willing to assume and how do you—how do you balance that? Or are you risk averse?

Mr. CHOLLET. Oh, we are going to have to balance some risks. There is no question. I mean, there is risk in whether we are looking at what we are doing in Europe to help support Ukraine, whether—what we are doing in the Indo-Pacific building up our alliances and partnerships and posturing ourselves to deter the PRC or the risk we live with every day in the Middle East. It is a constant effort to try to balance risk and get it right.

Senator FISCHER. What are your thoughts on the National Defense Strategy?

Mr. CHOLLET. I think the 2022 National Defense Strategy is quite strong and I think it is a natural continuation of the 2018 National Defense Strategy, which to my mind was a pivot point from the counterterrorism global war on terror two decades, more or less, to this new era of great power competition.

So I see continuity between 2018 strategy and 2022. I know that the National Defense Commission is getting its work underway to assess our implementation of the strategy. I know the commissioners—many of the commissioners quite well. I have spoken to them at length, and so I will look forward to cooperating with their efforts as their work proceeds.

Senator FISCHER. Let me continue on the National Defense Strategy and then I will get to the commission also. Some of the main tenets that we see in the National Defense Strategy, for example, the importance of campaigning or exercising with partners in the Indo-Pacific, those have been undercut, I believe, by budget requests that do not come close to fully funding these planned exercises.

If confirmed will you advocate for additional resources when they are needed when you have those discussions with the administration?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator Fischer, thanks for the question.

Yes, I believe that one of the most important things we can do in the Indo-Pacific is to ensure that we have the strongest alliances and partnerships possible.

There has been a lot of progress made over the last 2 years to develop those relationships further and create new configurations of partnerships through AUKUS and the Indo-Pacific Quad.

But absolutely I will fight for those resources, if confirmed.

Senator FISCHER. How do you think we can better strengthen those alliances? When we are watching what is going on in Ukraine and the NATO alliance that we have there my concern is when something would take place in the Indo-Pacific region we will not have the strength of as many allies as we currently have and you brought it up in your opening comments that we currently have seen formed and strengthened in Europe with Ukraine.

So how are we going to strengthen those partnerships in the Indo-Pacific to make sure that not only they continue but that they continue to be built?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator Fischer, I think it is absolutely critical that we strengthen and build the muscle tissue of those alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. I will just cite three examples—recent ones.

The work we have been doing with the Japanese and the Koreans in the trilateral format trying to strengthen ties between the two of them but also trilaterally has been critically important.

Second, AUKUS, of course, is an innovative game changer—a strategic pivot that is very, very important. We need to work together to implement that and get the Optimal Pathway off and running.

Then, third, the Indo-Pacific Quad, which this administration has elevated to the leaders level and it has become more and more an engine of our work in the Indo-Pacific.

Those are three examples. There is many others that, if confirmed, I need to work to ensure that we are moving the ball downfield.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Fischer.

Senator King, please?

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chollet, you are in a key position and it seems to me that policy—we are at a moment. You talked about 1918 and then 2022, the strategies and the shift.

But we need to have a shift toward the new kind of warfare and I am concerned that electronic warfare, cyber, and the vulnerability of some of our major assets have to be taken into account.

I just—I mean, it is a cliché but I worry that we are preparing for the last war. What is your sense in terms of our—the adequacy of our defense in terms of electronic warfare, cyber, hypersonics?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator King, thank you for the question and thanks for your leadership and advocacy on that issue set. It is very, very important.

I think the National Defense Strategy does stress the importance of those domains and ensuring the United States is both investing the resources and having the right strategy to get at the threats in those areas.

I remember well from when I previously served in the Pentagon 10 years ago Secretary Panetta giving a very important speech talking about cyber Pearl Harbor, which was one of the first efforts of a SECDEF to talk about cybersecurity from a Defense Department perspective.

I know there has been a lot of good work underway thanks to the support and leadership of the Congress on these issues and so, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and seeing how we can advance this issue.

Senator KING. I remember using the image of a cyber Pearl Harbor myself. I am not sure whether I stole it from Panetta or he stole it from me. But in any case, it is an absolutely critical element of looking forward.

I think one of the strengths you bring to this is your experience in the State Department. Alliances are our asymmetric advantage.

China has customers. We have allies, and to the extent we can continue to build on those alliances particularly in Asia and in the Pacific do you agree that that is one of the most important strategic and policy developments both from the Defense Department point of view but also from the Department of State and the U.S. Government?

Mr. CHOLLET. Absolutely, Senator King. This is our strategic advantage. It is an enduring advantage that we have.

We need to not just tend to those alliances and partnerships but make them stronger and expand them out. When I previously served at the Pentagon as the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs I covered the Middle East and Europe and the Western Hemisphere and Africa and I spent most of my waking hours working with our foreign partners on what we are doing together either through alliances or through strong partnerships.

I think there is a big piece of the job that I have been nominated for and, if confirmed, I would do that I think of as defense diplomacy, working with our allies and partners in conjunction with the State Department to ensure that we are doing what we can to cooperate, to give them resources, and to find ways we can work together to solve common problems.

Senator KING. One of the most important policy questions you have already touched on is Taiwan and the challenge, it seems to me—and we can discuss this further not in this setting—is the line between deterrence and provocation.

We want to deter the Chinese communists from any kind of violent attack on Taiwan. On the other hand, we do not want to take steps that would provoke it.

Let me turn to you, Ms. Abercrombie. I was trying to get a hold of Thom Tillis' handgun spec, which is an eight-inch stack of paper. We have got to do more off-the-shelf acquisition and not pay ridiculous amounts of money for custom platforms and devices and whatever it is the military needs. Do you agree?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Absolutely, Senator. Yes. I think we have so many innovations happening in the commercial sector today that it is incumbent upon the Defense Department to look outside for those developments as well as inside.

Senator KING. I hope you start with what can we find off the shelf rather than what can we design and have custom built. I hope that you want to flip that premise. You have touched on this.

But I think it is essential that we buy the IP along with the platform, not just for software but for the design of a valve so that—my vision is every depot, every hangar, every ship has a 3D printer and we do not have to wait for somebody to make a missing valve or a missing bolt or something that is necessary because we do not have very good availability both in terms of our aircraft and in terms of our naval facilities.

So not just IP of software. I hope you will commit. When you are buying a platform you should buy the IP for the whole—for the whole project so that we can then build on that ourselves. Do you agree?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Senator, if confirmed I will make it a priority to ensure the acquisition community is working to bake that in to the contracting process from the outset.

Senator KING. Thank you very much. I will have several other questions for the record. I want to—I hope to see you do more work with smaller businesses who tell us the Pentagon is just so much trouble to deal with they do not submit applications. We are missing a lot of innovations. So please attend to that.

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator King.

Senator Cotton, please?

Senator COTTON. Mr. Chollet, in the summer of 2020 you said the Army is a pretty bubba-oriented system. Do you still believe that?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I think the comment you are referring to was one where I was talking about the importance of leadership and mentorship and it was a colloquial way of saying that is very, very important.

Senator COTTON. So do you still believe the Army is a pretty bubba-oriented system?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe that leadership and mentorship in the Army is critical as it is critical in all of our services.

Senator COTTON. Do you think that that is a term of praise or a term of criticism?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is a colloquial phrase to talk about the importance of mentorship and leadership.

Senator COTTON. Why did you not you say in that New York Times interview in the summer of 2020 that leadership is important in the Army? Why did you call it a bubba-oriented system?

Mr. CHOLLET. My recollection is that article was about the importance of having diversity in leadership throughout the armed forces and I was stressing the importance of leaders making that a priority.

Senator COTTON. In the article you also imply pretty strongly that criticism of Barack Obama's foreign policy was driven in part by systemic racism. Do you still believe that criticism of Barack Obama's foreign policy is in part racist?

Mr. CHOLLET. I think there is no question that there were arguments made about President Obama that were rooted in race. No question about it.

Senator COTTON. Let us consider some of those decisions in which you played a part. You defended strongly the Syrian red line fiasco as late as 2016. Do you still believe it was correct for President Obama not to enforce his own red line in Syria?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe it was an accomplishment for the United States working with a multinational coalition to get 1,300 tons of chemical weapons out of Syria.

Senator COTTON. Relying on Vladimir Putin?

Mr. CHOLLET. It was an accomplishment to get 1,300 tons of chemical weapons out of Syria, Senator.

Senator COTTON. You, obviously, did not get it all out of Syria because Bashar al-Assad later gassed his own people again, did he not?

Mr. CHOLLET. He used chemical weapons that were made out of chlorine—industrial chemicals—which is not part of his chemical weapons program.

Senator COTTON. Do you believe it was—do you believe it was correct for Donald Trump to enforce Barack Obama's own red line when he bombed Bashar al-Assad after gassing his own people?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe it was important for the United States to engage in the counter ISIL campaign, which began in the fall of 2014, which continues to this day.

Senator COTTON. Yes or no, do you support—did you support Donald Trump's decision to enforce Barack Obama's own red line?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do not recall that decision.

Senator COTTON. You do not recall bombing Syria during Donald Trump's presidency?

Mr. CHOLLET. That specific incident, Senator, I do not recall.

Senator COTTON. So one thing that Barack Obama did 10 years ago was toss the decision to bomb Syria to Congress, looking for a scapegoat. Obviously, he did not submit the decision to bomb Libya to Congress in 2011.

What is the difference? Why did we need congressional approval to bomb Syria in 2013 but not Libya in 2011?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I cannot speak for President Obama on this.

Senator COTTON. You were on the White House staff at the time in 2011, right?

Mr. CHOLLET. I was, Senator. I was not part of that decision with President Obama. I can say they were two very different circumstances.

Senator COTTON. What is—what is your view of that question? Do you think we needed congressional approval to bomb Syria?

Mr. CHOLLET. At the time I supported the—I was not part of the decision but I supported President Obama coming to the Congress to get the support of the American people to whether or not we, the United States, were going to intervene in the civil war in Syria.

Senator COTTON. Do you think the—do you think the intervention in Libya was wise policy?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I have written extensively about—

Senator COTTON. I have read it. Yes, I have read it.

Mr. CHOLLET.—the lessons learned of our intervention in Libya.

Senator COTTON. That is why I am asking you here publicly.

Mr. CHOLLET. At the time I did believe it was the right policy, yes.

Senator COTTON. So you do not believe it anymore?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believed at the time, given the circumstances we faced, it was the right policy.

Senator COTTON. So Barack Obama has said publicly that Libya is a mess. Privately I will not say what he said since there are young children in the audience but it ends with show and it starts with “sh.” Do you agree with President Obama’s retrospective assessment about what kind of mess Libya is?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe the—thanks, Senator. I believe that the aftermath of the Libyan war including up until today, unfortunately, with this terrible, devastating natural disaster with the dam breaking, killing thousands of Libyans, is an aftermath of that. But long—

Senator COTTON. But let me ask you this. So we withdrew support for a pro-American ruler in Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, when he was toppled. We bombed a de facto pro-American leader in Libya, Muammar Qaddafi, and he was ultimately removed from power.

We did not bomb an anti-American dictator in Syria, Bashar al-Assad. Can you explain that series of decisions in the Arab Spring? Why it seems like we always topple the pro-American rulers there and we sided with the anti-American pro-Iran rulers?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, again, thanks for the question, and I have thought and written extensively about this. I believe—I believed at the time and I believe now it was the correct decision not to intervene directly in that Syrian civil war.

But it was also the correct decision to intervene directly to conduct the counter ISIL campaign, which the United States began with the support of Congress in the fall of—

Senator COTTON. Okay. Let me turn to your judgment on a contemporary matter.

So the Obama or the Biden administration has been wracked by unwarranted anxiety about threats of escalation in Ukraine.

So members of this Committee and both parties have repeatedly pointed out how there has been one weapon system after another, the latest one being ATACMS, that President Biden has refused to send to Ukraine only to reverse himself three or six or 9 months later—a long-standing pattern.

In retrospect do you agree there is any weapon system that the Biden administration should have sent earlier than it finally ended up sending them or do you think it has pitched a perfect game on every decision?

Mr. CHOLLET. Oh, I do not think anyone would presume there has been a perfect game pitch for sure. But I am satisfied with the amount of assistance the United States with the support of the Congress has provided to Ukraine.

Senator COTTON. I did not say if you are satisfied or the overall—I am saying that there has been probably at least a dozen different weapon systems—the latest ATACMS, F-16s, Abram tanks, cluster munitions—in which the Biden administration has ruled them out only to turn around and deliver them three, six, 9 months later.

Is there any specific weapon system that you think the Biden administration made a mistake on that it ultimately delivered and it should have delivered earlier?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I am proud of the administration's record on providing an unprecedented amount of assistance to Ukraine—\$44 billion dollars.

Senator COTTON. My time is up. I would take that as a no and yet another example of the bad judgment you have displayed for a very long time on these critical foreign policy questions.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Cotton.

Senator HIRONO, please?

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I ask the following two initial questions of all nominees who come before any of my committees so I will ask these questions of you. I will start with—since you became a legal adult have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

Mr. CHOLLET. No, Senator.

Senator HIRONO. Ms. Abercrombie?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. No, Senator.

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

Mr. CHOLLET. No, Senator.

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. No, Senator.

Senator HIRONO. For Mr. Chollet, the Compact of Free Association and the monetary assistance within them are inextricably tied to USINDOPACOM posture and national security. Are you familiar with the compacts and their purposes?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator Hirono, thanks for the question. I really appreciate our time the other week talking about this and many other issues in your office.

I am very familiar with the so-called COFA agreements and their critical importance to our security.

Senator HIRONO. Good, because can you expound a little bit more about why these compacts are critically important and even as we are pretty much negotiating those compacts even as we speak?

Mr. CHOLLET. We need to—

Senator HIRONO. Can you expound a little bit more on why they are so important?

Mr. CHOLLET. Sure, Senator.

These compacts help provide critical access to our forces and personnel throughout the Pacific Islands, which given the challenges we are facing in the Indo-Pacific particularly emanating from the PRC that access is absolutely critical to our security.

Senator HIRONO. Especially as we are very focused on the INDOPACOM AOR, that our agreements with the compact nations—Palau, Micronesia, and—

Mr. CHOLLET. I am sorry, Senator?

Senator HIRONO.—Micro Islands very important. Thank you.

So for you again, missile technology has rapidly developed, perhaps now has even outpaced our policy process. As our adversaries modernize we must adapt to ensure strategic locations like Hawaii are protected.

How do you believe that DOD can improve its policies regarding cruise and hypersonic missile defense of the homeland?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, thank you, and thank you for your continued advocacy on this issue set. Obviously, the defense of Hawaii and defense of Guam are absolutely critical to our security.

My understanding, Senator, is that Hawaii has the same protection as the 49 other states and I know the department has been making some critical investments and upgrading our missile defense posture to cover Hawaii.

If confirmed I can pledge to you that I will continue to remain very focused on this and will look forward, if confirmed, and working with you and your team to ensure we are doing what we need to do to ensure Hawaii's protection.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you very much, because there was a time when there was a particular kind of radar system that was going to be placed in Hawaii and that is no longer the case and that is why I continue to pursue missile defense of Hawaii and I will work with you, of course, should you be confirmed.

For you again, I introduced a bill last year to establish embassies in several Pacific islands so I particularly appreciate the administration's announcements at the Pacific Island Forum Summit this week improving relationships in the Pacific both diplomatically and with military-to-military engagements is foundational to national security.

If nominated—well, you have been nominated—how would you use your State Department and DOD experience to build on DOD's efforts in campaigning and demonstrating our commitment to allies in the region?

Mr. CHOLLET. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Our work to strengthen our partnerships with the Pacific islands has been quite intense over the last year. President Biden, as you noted, just on Monday hosted his second summit of Pacific island leaders.

Secretary Blinken just 2 days ago met with the Pacific island leaders from Palau, the Marshall Islands, and Micronesia to talk about the COFA process.

So I can tell you if confirmed I would certainly carry this effort forward at the Pentagon because this is a critical, critical set of relationships for the Department of Defense. The State Department has been in the lead in negotiating these agreements but the benefits are really with the Department of Defense.

Senator HIRONO. I think that the more we are diplomatically engaged, not just militarily engaged, with our island nation friends it is important because, for example, places like the Solomon Islands that China is very much engaged in what is going on there.

I would note that with regard to the COFA negotiations we need to complete our agreements with the Marshallese and my hope is that we are going to see our way through to enable them to sign on to this 20-year compact that is critical to our national defense.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

Senator Rounds, please?

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Abercrombie and Mr. Chollet, first of all, thank you to both of you for your service to our country.

Mr. Chollet, we discussed the impact of auctioning off the 3.1 to 3.45 gigahertz band of the spectrum and the impact it would have on DOD capabilities when you were in my office briefly.

Most importantly, we have now asked 22 separate uniformed officers in a row about their opinion as to whether or not that particular part of the spectrum should be sold or shared with commercial interests.

Not one of them has been supportive of that approach. In fact, the Navy stated that transitioning the systems operating on the lower band would cost over \$260 billion.

Additionally, the impact to homeland defense would be dramatic and span several decades. Based on your knowledge of this issue and the testimony of senior uniformed officers what would be your advice to the Secretary of Defense on the auctioning of the 3.1 to 3.45 gigahertz portion of the spectrum?

Mr. CHOLLET. Thank you, Senator Rounds, and I really appreciate the time you gave me the other day to speak in your office and also thank you for what you have been doing to champion this issue and make sure that we all understand the implications and the importance of these—this part of the spectrum.

Based on everything I have heard I would associate myself with the concerns that have been expressed to this Committee about the auctioning off and the importance of that part of the spectrum to our national security and so I would advise the Secretary to tread very carefully here, and I know that there has been a report done that I have not yet had a chance to see.

If confirmed, I would ask to see it on day one to better understand about how we can move forward on this. But I fully, fully appreciate the national security implications.

Senator ROUNDS. Okay. Thank you. Let me just ask and—Ms. Abercrombie, I have appreciated the discussions that we have had. I do not have a lot of questions for you today but I do want to fol-

lowup, Mr. Chollet, with a couple of questions specifically with regard to reports.

I agree that that report needs to come out and I think the more we share you have indicated that you would be very open in sharing the information back and forth.

You currently in the Department of State have the opportunities to share information as well. You have already had a beginning discussion with regard to what happened in Afghanistan and I do not think there is anybody that thinks that that was a perfect operation in any way, shape, or form.

We were able to discuss briefly in our office the withdrawal from Afghanistan and as I mentioned before many of us still have unanswered questions about the sequence of events and decisions that were made over a period of time literally of months and days.

As the State Department's counselor do you commit to making the State Department's classified after-action report in Afghanistan available to the members of this Committee?

Mr. CHOLLET. Thank you, Senator, for the question, and you are absolutely right.

We need to have accountability and learn lessons from not just what happened in August 2021 but the 20-year war that the United States fought with Afghanistan.

Senator ROUNDS. Look, I am going to run out of time but this is important because you are moving into a position in the Department of Defense where you are going to be making policy recommendations.

Part of that means sharing good information with Members of this Committee to either gain support or to literally revisit whether or not those recommendations are appropriate or not.

Pretty straightforward as to whether or not as the counselor for the Department of State are you prepared in your current position to make that report available?

I am not asking you to declassify it but it should be made available to members here so that we can see it. What is your opinion as a policymaker in your current position? Are you prepared to make that available to members of this Committee?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, as you know, we—the State Department has provided that report to the Oversight Committee, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as well as on the House side and also published portions of that report on the web—on the State Department website.

I would commit to you to taking it back to my State Department colleagues and noting your desire to—

Senator ROUNDS. That is fair, and would you be prepared to take that back and to have the report back to us prior to a vote on your confirmation?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, it is not my decision on whether or not to share these reports but I certainly will take back your question and advocate on behalf. I believe we should be as transparent as we can be with Congress on this.

Senator ROUNDS. Do you believe that that should be made available to this Committee? It was members of the Department of Defense that actually were participating that day in Afghanistan when we lost 13 members.

Mr. CHOLLET. Absolutely, and I think every day about the 2,400 lost and the 13 lost at Abbey Gate.

Senator ROUNDS. Okay. But the reason—the reason why I ask it is this is a test. This is a test to find out whether or not in the future you would also work with us on getting the information that we need to either question the policy recommendations that you have made or to support those policies.

I think this Committee does a great job on a bipartisan basis. But we have got to be able to have the information to make those recommendations and learn the reasoning behind them.

Do you understand the reason why I am asking for that report to be made public and the reason why I think it is so important that you be in a position to comfortably be able to go back to the bosses and say, we need to make these reports available so that they can either support or ask questions about the decisions that are made?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I can commit to you that I will take that back to my State Department colleagues and make the case.

Senator ROUNDS. Okay. Thank you, Mr.—thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, sir.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Senator Warren, please?

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chollet, Ms. Abercrombie, it is good to see you both here. Congratulations on your nomination. Welcome to your family and thank you very much for the many years that you have both put in to public service.

When the U.S. military operations kill civilians we damage our reputation and it becomes a national security liability, and that is why I have worked with DOD to create a civilian protection center of excellence as part of a comprehensive plan to address this problem.

The State Department is also enhancing oversight to make sure that U.S.-provided weapons do not contribute to civilian harm. This is progress, real progress, but there is still more that needs to be done.

In May CENTCOM conducted a strike in Syria that may have resulted in the death of a farmer and a father of 10. It took a litany of press coverage to convince the Joint Special Operations Command to finally open up a civilian casualty credibility assessment report 2 weeks later. This approach is only one of the many instances where the public have come to doubt DOD's credibility.

Mr. Chollet, do you agree that it is important for our investigations to be regarded as credible around the world?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator Warren, thank you for the question and thank you for the time in your office the other day and your leadership on this issue.

As we have discussed multiple times, ensuring that the United States military does whatever it can and has the capabilities it can to prevent civilian casualties is critical.

I believe the U.S. military is the most effective fighting force in the world in doing so. But whenever there are instances in which there may have been civilian casualties it is important to have a credible investigation of that.

Senator WARREN. Okay. A key way that these investigations could be improved and the results more trusted by communities that were affected by casualties is for DOD investigators to work with civil society organizations on the ground as they work to uncover what actually happened.

When I visited Ukraine last month I was impressed by how closely their military works with civil society organizations to prevent and respond to civilian casualties. It can help improve investigations and it can help save lives in the long run.

Mr. Chollet, will you commit to ensuring that DOD works more closely with civil society organizations when reviewing and responding to allegations of civilian casualties?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator Warren, thanks for the question.

I know the Defense Department has revamped its efforts and tried to add some capability to understand the civilian casualty question whenever there is an instance where that may have occurred. Working with civil society organizations is absolutely critical. If confirmed I will dig into this and work toward that objective.

Senator WARREN. Okay. In 2018 a Joint Staff review found that 58 percent of acknowledged cases of civilian harm originated from civil society organizations and external investigations—more than half—and yet too often DOD has seen outsiders as the enemy rather than as the valuable resource that they can be.

It is clear that we still need more progress, that DOD needs to do more on engaging civil society and helping improve its credibility in this area. I am very glad to hear you say that you will take the lead in this because we are depending on you to get this right.

Ultimately, this is good for America's military, this is good for our Nation, and it helps us all around the world. Thank you very much, Mr. Chollet.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Warren.

Senator Ernst, please?

Senator ERNST. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Chollet and Ms. Abercrombie, for being in front of us today and I want to thank your families as well for their support.

So, Mr. Chollet, I will start with you. I have consistently worked hard to lead bipartisan and bicameral efforts to counter Iran and I am very upset that the Biden administration continues to put more Americans at risk through their strategy of appeasement, which has emboldened Iranian aggression.

So, Mr. Chollet, you currently serve as the State Department counselor and during your tenure with the State Department hired a Ms. Ariane Tabatabai, who we have recently learned was part of an Iranian Government information operation, and according to reports Ms. Tabatabai sought feedback from Iran's foreign minister on conferences she attended and in testimony she provided before Congress.

She now serves in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for SOLIC—Special Operations Low-Intensity Conflict—which you will oversee if you are confirmed as under secretary.

Do you believe it is prudent to have an individual with a history of conferring with Iranian officials in a highly sensitive role related to counterterrorism and special operations?

Mr. CHOLLET. Thank you, Senator, for the question. I appreciated the time we spent together in your office last week.

I know nothing about this particular instance. I only know what I have read in the press. All I can say is given my experience at the Defense Department as well as the State Department and the National Security Council anyone who serves in a position of national security has to go through a rigorous background check.

But other than that, I know nothing about this episode.

Senator ERNST. Right. So let us—let us talk a little bit about that.

So she does have a clearance. Do you believe it would be prudent to suspend her clearance then pending review in light of these allegations that she participated in an Iranian information operation to mislead the American public?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, again, I know nothing about this allegation so I am not in a position to comment on it.

Senator ERNST. Okay. It would be my opinion that it should be suspended.

We will talk about the security clearance process as well. It is widely known, and you just stated, that they go through a rigorous vetting process.

So it is known that security clearances require individuals to report personal interactions with foreign equities, and as the chief adviser to the Secretary of State you have access to records of State Department employees and you have stated to the best of your knowledge then that this individual, Ms. Tabatabai, disclosed this relationship when she worked for you at the State Department or not?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I have no knowledge of this case at all. I would assume that all of the normal procedures were followed here but I do not have any direct knowledge of that.

Senator ERNST. So I would then suspect that maybe she did not disclose this information but we need to find this out and, again, because we do not know this I think the clearance should be suspended.

So, if confirmed, do you commit to sharing Ms. Tabatabai's security clearance information with this Committee?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, thanks for the question.

If confirmed I am not sure I would have the authority to do that necessarily. But, if confirmed, I pledge to you that I would look into any instance in which there is questions about the security inside the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

Senator ERNST. If confirmed what actions do you intend to take to prevent department officials from further engaging in unauthorized collaboration with Iranians?

Mr. CHOLLET. Well, Senator, I think it is part of the deal in having a security clearance that one does not do that. So I would expect that that sort of behavior would stop if it was ever uncovered.

Senator ERNST. I would expect that as well.

Mr. Chollet, Iran continues to threaten United States military personnel in the Middle East and remains intent on assassinating American citizens here in the United States.

Why is it acceptable, in your view, for the administration to continue offering Iran substantial sanctions relief while Iran continues to target American citizens for murder?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I think one of the most foremost responsibilities I would have if confirmed for this position is ensuring that we are doing whatever we can to deter Iran and push back from its malign behavior across the board in the region and around the world.

I think we have restored some degree of deterrence over the last several months. There has not been an attack on our forces in Syria since March. There has not been an attack on our forces in Iraq for over a year.

But every day we need to wake up and make sure that we are doing what we can to deter Iran so that they do not think that today is the day.

Senator ERNST. Obviously, Mr. Chollet, the administration's view of Iran and my view of Iran is very, very different. I know this will be a point of contention as we move forward through your confirmation process.

But I appreciate your answers. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Ernst.

Senator Blumenthal, please?

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you both for your public service and your families.

Ms. Abercrombie, I am deeply concerned about the apparent shortfall that we are seeing in ammunition going to Ukraine. I share and I have expressed very vocally some of the reservations about the past administration delivery, sometimes later than we would like to see, of critical weapons platforms, whether they are armored vehicles, tanks, F-16s, and now ATACMS, which I think are vital.

But there should be no question that the 155-millimeter artillery shells are needed to produce at a much heightened rate. We are now producing them I think at about one-tenth the volume that the Ukrainians are using them and they are going to run out of them. We are going to run out of them. That is just one example.

What would you do in your role as, in effect, the main Pentagon official in charge of acquisition to speed and increase the production of key defense supplies that are needed by the Ukrainians and would one of those possible measures include building more production capacity in Ukraine?

I have spoken to both the White House and I have talked to President Zelensky about it. Talked to him in Ukraine when I visited last a number of weeks ago and here when he visited, and the Ukrainians are ready to build.

What they need is the investment to build. They were once the hub of the Soviet Union's defense capabilities, as you know, and they could be again if provided with the capital to do so and the air defense.

So two questions. What would you do, generally, and what can we do to increase the capacity of Ukraine to build its own production capacity?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Senator, thank you for raising this extremely important question.

I think from the United States standpoint a robust and resilient Defense Industrial Base is critical, not just in terms of providing us with capability that we need and providing capability to allies and partners but sending a strong deterrent signal that we can be agile.

And so one way we could do that if confirmed, Senator, in my role would be signaling to industry the demand signal to expand that capacity by putting things on contracts and to that I would like to thank this Committee in particular for the multiyear procurement authority authorized last year for munitions.

I think that helps the Department of Defense send that demand signal to industry to put some of their own skin in the game to build out capacity.

But in terms of working with allies and partners, I think we can see an opportunity for expanding the pie, if you will, working with allies and partners to more broadly expand our collective Defense Industrial Base.

Senator, I do think looking at industrial cooperation with Ukraine is a very compelling idea in aiding and if confirmed I would like to support that.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. The President, I believe, announced an agreement—a joint weapons production agreement with the Ukrainian Government last week. Three Ukrainian corporations signed agreements with more than 2,000 United States defense companies to rebuild Ukraine's defense capacity.

What can be done to expedite those agreements and to arrive at more of them?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Senator, yes, I think the White House made that announcement when President Zelensky was here, as you noted. I think one thing we can do is use our engagement with United States American industry to facilitate some of those partnerships.

We cannot make decisions on behalf of industry, certainly, but we can lend the U.S. Government's support for any potential co-production or co-development.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Are there changes in the Defense Production Act that need to be done to increase both the production capacity in the United States of our own industrial base as well as those of, for example, our allied nations? The NDAA of 2024 includes now Australia and the U.K.

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Right.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. But what about Ukraine?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Senator, I think if confirmed I pledge to you to look into that working with my colleagues in the industrial base policy office.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal.

Senator Scott, please?

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman.

First off, congratulations on your nominations. Thanks for your willingness to serve.

So my first question is for Mr. Chollet. So you have spent a great deal of your career at the State Department so congratulations on that, and I think you have served the entire Biden administration.

During the Biden administration's time in office here is what has happened. Russia has waged a war in Europe with its horrible invasion of Ukraine. The United States was humiliated by President Biden's botched withdrawal from Afghanistan which left \$80 billion of United States military equipment in the hands of the Taliban, allowed communist China to gain an even stronger foothold in the Middle East, and took the lives of 13 United States servicemembers.

Communist China has increased its unacceptable bullying of our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. They are threatening Taiwan. They are disrespecting the sovereignty of the Philippines with illegal land use in the West Philippine Sea. North Korea has resumed ballistic missile testing, and while all of this is happening the United States military now has hard time recruiting people.

I believe these issues are a reflection of unacceptable failure by the civilian leadership at the Pentagon. Our servicemembers are patriots who are willing to give their lives for our freedom but they are being failed by current civilian leadership and policy.

So here is my question. As the No. 3 at DOD what changes would you start making on day one to fix these problems?

Mr. CHOLLET. Well, Senator Scott, thank you for the question.

Look, I think that—I see things a bit differently in terms of where we are in the world in terms of our posture in the world.

I look across the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East, and Europe and I see in Europe a NATO that is stronger, larger, and more united than it has been in my professional lifetime.

Senator SCOTT. Can I stop you there? Maybe—would we be better off if they were not united and we were not at war?

Mr. CHOLLET. Oh, I mean—

Senator SCOTT. I mean, we are sitting there. They have—we have got war in Europe. We are spending billions of dollars. So I like the fact that we are unified but, golly, look at where we are. We got people dying every day, and Russia did not do this before.

Mr. CHOLLET. Well, Russia has done it before. It did it in 2008 in Georgia and then in 2014 in Ukraine and it has done it again in 2022 in Ukraine, and so, yes, the United States—we tried to prevent this war from happening.

We tried to release intelligence to expose what Vladimir Putin was up to. But I think the result, again, due to in large part to U.S. leadership—

Senator SCOTT. Let us go back to the question. Would you do something different?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I think there is a very strong foundation in terms of alliances and partnerships around the world that I will seek to build on. But, obviously, we are always looking for ways to innovate and go further.

Senator SCOTT. So there is nothing you would do different than what was done?

Mr. CHOLLET. Well, there will be things I will do different. The——

Senator SCOTT. I mean, China is getting worse. North Korea is getting worse. Russia is worse. So there is nothing you would change at DOD?

Mr. CHOLLET. Oh, the—if confirmed one of the first things I will do is assess the situation and fully understand what we could be doing differently, particularly when it comes to advancing our alliances and partnerships.

We cannot change China or North Korea or Russia but what we can do is make sure that we are better positioned by the United States alone but also working with our allies and partners to deal with the challenges those countries pose.

Senator SCOTT. You do not think we can deter them?

Mr. CHOLLET. Oh, we absolutely can deter them. We must deter them, in fact.

Senator SCOTT. So what would you do—what would you do to deter them?

Mr. CHOLLET. Well, so it starts with investing in ourselves and ensuring that the Defense Department and the U.S. military, our warfighters, have what they need to be a modern, lethal, capable force.

It all starts with deterrence. We need our adversaries to wake up every day and say to themselves, today is not the day.

Senator SCOTT. What would you do to change the recruitment?

Mr. CHOLLET. Well, Senator, I would work closely with my colleague in Personnel and Readiness as well as the services to understand what role policy would play in trying to help meet this recruitment challenge, which no question there is across three of the five services or four of the five services.

Senator SCOTT. Yes, four of the five. Thank you.

Ms. Abercrombie, so I have been up here four and a half years. Every time somebody comes up from DOD I ask why cannot you—why cannot you figure out how to get our military providers to get equipment done quicker.

Everybody says they are going to go back and look at it. Oh, they are going to try. We have passed a whole bunch of changes in the NDAA.

Is there a culture problem at the DOD? If you did this in private business, I mean, you would not keep your job because it is not getting—does not seem like it is getting better.

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Senator, thank you for the question. I do think DOD has made some improvements in large part due to flexible authorities authorized by—provided by the Congress.

If confirmed what I pledge to do is go in and assess are those flex—are those new authorities being effectively utilized across the board.

If not, I will work to make sure the workforce is getting the training and the signals from the top that this is important for us to do, and I would also further assess if any additional changes might be required and would pledge to come back to the Congress seeking those changes.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Peters, please?

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chollet, I certainly believe that a close working relationship and security cooperation between the United States and Israel is of the utmost importance to United States foreign policy, and in your previous role as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security you worked closely with your Israeli counterparts to expand security cooperation between our two countries.

So my question for you, sir, is what did you learn from that experience and, if confirmed, what can we expect in your new role in terms of strengthening our defense ties with Israel?

Mr. CHOLLET. Well, thank you, Senator Peters, very much for that question.

You are, indeed, right. When I was the assistant secretary for ISA 10 years ago I worked more closely with Israel than any other partner we had.

I think I made about a dozen trips to Israel in the course of 3 years to that job and hosted Israeli friends here many times and these are relationships that I have kept up ever since.

I can tell you that the United States-Israel defense relationship right now is rock solid. It is based on an MOU that was negotiated several years ago to ensure that the United States is providing significant assistance to our Israeli partners.

But the cooperation between the United States and Israel is a daily, hourly enterprise and if confirmed I would make it a high priority to continue to deepen that relationship and ensure that our Israeli friends have what they need to defend themselves by themselves.

Senator PETERS. Just to followup then, Mr. Chollet, this Congress I introduced along with bipartisan support from Senator Fischer the United States-Israel Future of Warfare Act, which would authorize \$50 million in joint research and development funds to enhance cooperation with Israel in areas of emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, quantum computing, and other technologies.

So my question for you is if confirmed how would the—in your opinion how would the Defense Department benefit from such a cooperation and do you—would you continue to support expanding our cooperation, particularly in these emerging technology fields?

Mr. CHOLLET. Thanks, Senator Peters, for the question.

Absolutely I will look forward to taking a closer look at your legislation. I can say that because of Israel's significant capabilities on the cutting edge of technology in warfare that is one of the reasons why this partnership is so critical for us.

If confirmed, I would seek to advance that cooperation because there is a lot that Israel learns from us but there is also a lot that we learn from Israel.

Senator PETERS. Absolutely.

Mr. Chollet, Israel's integration into the Middle East has certainly been broadened by the historic normalization agreements that we have seen with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan. All of these are known as the Abraham Accords, as you are well aware.

By creating defense and military partnerships with our Gulf allies Israel is enhancing opportunities for peace and integration while working together to counter some shared threats including Iran's destabilizing activities throughout that region.

My question for you is if confirmed what role do you see the United States military playing in strengthening and hopefully expanding the Abraham Accords?

Mr. CHOLLET. Thanks, Senator Peters, for the question.

In my view, the Abraham Accords were the most positive thing to happen in the Middle East in quite some time and this administration and I personally have worked hard in the last few years to deepen the Abraham Accords but also expand the network of countries in which Israel has normalized relations.

It is unquestionably in our interest to see Israel have closer ties with her neighbors. It is a project I have worked on intensively in my role at the State Department. It is something I would certainly carry forward and make a priority in the Defense Department, if confirmed.

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

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Peters.

Senator Tuberville, please?

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to both of you for being here today.

Just one question on Ukraine, Mr. Chollet. If Vladimir Putin called you today and said, listen, if you will just tell me that Ukraine will never be allowed in NATO we will move back to our 2021 borders, all fighting will stop, what would you say?

Mr. CHOLLET. I would say, President Putin, it is not your decision where Ukraine is going to be allied with.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Okay. What do you think was the biggest misstep in the Afghanistan withdrawal and your thoughts after looking at it?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I think there are so many lessons that we have to learn as a country by the 20-year engagement we had in Afghanistan—2,400 troops lost, 20,000 injured, \$2 trillion spent.

It is why I applaud what Congress did with the support of this Committee and the leadership of this Committee to create the Afghan War Commission, and if confirmed I pledge to you that I will do whatever I can to support the work of that commission because it is critically important that we learn the lessons and apply the lessons of that 20-year engagement in Afghanistan.

Senator TUBERVILLE. So do think we made some mistakes in the withdrawal?

Mr. CHOLLET. I think, Senator, that there, of course, were mistakes made over that 20-year period, absolutely.

Senator TUBERVILLE. I have seen some statements that you have made about our immigration and our border. Two years ago you can talk to pretty much any law enforcement officer in Alabama—they had never heard of fentanyl, okay.

We had less than a hundred overdoses a year. Now fentanyl is number-one in our State and we will lose over a thousand people this year.

What do we tell the families that—kids are dying because of fentanyl—that we will not do anything at the border? What do we tell them?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I really appreciate you asking this question because shining a light on the scourge that is fentanyl and the damage it is doing in so many communities across this country is absolutely critical.

I can say that at the State Department Secretary Blinken has tried to make this into a global issue. Fentanyl is the number-one killer of Americans 18 to 49 and it is a problem that we cannot solve alone because of the elaborate supply chain that creates fentanyl that ends up in U.S. communities.

So just last week in New York Secretary Blinken hosted a meeting of foreign ministers to talk about ways that countries can work together to try to fight the scourge of fentanyl because it is not just the United States alone that is facing this challenge. Synthetic opioids are ravaging the Middle East and Asia as well.

So we have absolutely got to get at this problem. One of the things that I will do, if confirmed, at DOD is to understand DOD's role and see what more DOD can do to get at this problem.

Senator TUBERVILLE. It does not seem like that we have everything in order from the DOD. In May the administration sent 1,500 troops to the border. In August we pulled out 1,100 and a few days ago we sent 800 back.

If confirmed I hope we get a little bit more consistency down there because we are—I do not know if you have been down there. It is a complete mess, and we need to save our kids.

Let us get to my topic. You know what I have got. I have got a hold on admirals and generals through abortion. I am pro-life. You will be part of solving this problem, if confirmed, and it is a problem. I want to get this over with as much as anybody. How do we work this out?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, thanks for the question.

From where I sit—

Senator TUBERVILLE. I know you have thought about this.

Mr. CHOLLET. From where I sit, look, we need our team on the field. Given the challenges that we face in the world, from the pacing threat of China to the threat of Russia, we need all the team on the field.

We cannot fight with one hand behind our back is my view and the job I have been nominated for as a senior civilian at the Defense Department I am going to want my military teammates in their jobs as well.

So it is my humble view that this issue gets resolved as soon as possible.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. Well, there is nobody more military up here than me. But I just hope we can work this out.

The problem that I have—and I represent people in Alabama, and abortion is a very controversial subject and it should be voted on by the people. My people in the State of Alabama want say so about what happens to their tax dollars with abortion and that is the situation that I am in. I represent the people of my State and, hopefully, we can work this out.

But I just wanted to get your thoughts because you will be right in the thick of this as we go along in the next few months. Hopefully, it is not months. Hopefully, it is just days.

But thank you for being here. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Tuberville.

Senator Kelly, please?

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think it is important to point out and comment on what Senator Tuberville just said. I think the quote was, there is nobody more military than me.

As far as I could tell there is at least four of us, maybe more, that served in the United States military, in some cases for decades, and at least three combat veterans.

So I take great exception to what Senator Tuberville had to say and I have heard him say it before and it just does not make any sense.

So I wish you would please reevaluate what you think your experience and just be a little bit more careful about what you say about the United States military.

I am very happy to defer to Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. When you have a—when you have a father—when you have had a father die on Active Duty you have got a right to say whatever you want.

Thank you very much.

Senator KELLY. I do not think that is the case. You have folks here that have served in the United States military and, I think, in multiple branches.

So, Mr. Chollet, just returned from a trip to Ukraine last week. This is my second this year and I feel it is important to be on the ground to understand the issues we are facing and they are significant. The holds that Senator Tuberville has placed on our military is having an effect with our forces in Ukraine and it is had an impact.

But I want to talk about something else and that is the role commercial capabilities have had in Ukraine, and we have seen this with Starlink and others and I am just a little surprised that we got this far and realized that because of a war in Europe that we had a gap in our own capability and I think that is something we need to consider, going forward.

I know there has been a little controversy about the Starlink services in Ukraine. I met with Gwynne Shotwell from SpaceX yesterday. The details on this are a little bit complicated and what has been publicly reported is just not—it is not accurate.

So looking forward here it is critical that DOD structures some of its contracts with commercial providers—I am not specifically talking about SpaceX—to ensure that services that our troops and allies depend upon will be there when they need them.

So, Mr. Chollet, I would like to continue the discussion we had in my office a couple of weeks back. If confirmed what will your approach be to ensuring that future commercial contracts regardless of the provider and across the department have the provisions necessary to ensure their services will be there when they—when they need them?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator Kelly, thank you for the question and thank you for the time the other week in your office, and thank you for going a second time to Ukraine.

It is very, very important that Members of Congress go regularly to Ukraine to see for yourselves what is going on and assess the situation and what we need to do differently.

This is an issue that I will be engaged in, if confirmed, because Ukraine has been an incubator in many ways of defense innovation just given the way the Ukrainians have been—have been utilizing the private sector as well as what the United States and others have been providing them.

So if confirmed I would work closely with my colleagues in the acquisition space to see that we are doing what we can to ensure that we are innovating as best we can when it comes to working with the private sector and in getting Ukraine and anyone else the assistance that they need to protect themselves.

Senator KELLY. Ms. Abercrombie, do you intend when you are confirmed here—intend to review existing contracts that the department has with our commercial providers to ensure that they meet DOD requirements?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Senator, if confirmed I think it is absolutely essential that I take a look to make sure, No. 1, we have baked in an understanding with commercial providers from the outset what the DOD requirements are so that we do not have surprises down the road and we have what we need and certainly, Senator, would commit to making sure we are retroactively looking to ensure we have all the capability we need when we need it.

Senator KELLY. Mr. Chollet, do you have any additional concerns about how our adversaries might weaponize commercial services that are available and what we could possibly do to prevent that?

Mr. CHOLLET. Well, Senator, thanks for the question.

I do have concerns looking at it from the outside because it does seem to be an area of vulnerability. If confirmed it is something I will look into from the inside and fully understand the scope of the vulnerability and what we can do to get at that.

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

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kelly.

Senator Mullin, please?

Senator MULLIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Kelly, you may want to clarify those statements because a family member serves alongside the servicemember, too, especially a Gold Star family, and if you do not believe that then go talk to the Gold Star families themselves because Mr. Tuberville is part of that Gold Star family and I will comment there—

Senator KELLY. Senator—Senator, I appreciate—

Senator MULLIN. No. No. I am not yielding time. I am just saying you may want to clarify that statement because—

Senator KELLY. Well, I can clarify it right now.

Senator MULLIN. I know, but it is my time.

Mr. Chollet, you have made several comments talking about the Biden administration's withdrawal and the success of it. Obviously, I have some serious concerns about that.

First of all, has anybody been held accountable for the disastrous withdrawal that took place considering the American lives that were lost and how many Americans we left behind?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator Mullin, thank you for the question and thank you for the time in your office the other week and I genuinely—

Senator MULLIN. I just—I am short on time. I just—has anybody been held accountable?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, accountability is critically important as—

Senator MULLIN. No, I am just saying has anybody been held accountable. That is a simple one. It is a yes or it is a no.

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, we tried to learn the lessons from that.

Senator MULLIN. Has anybody been held accountable?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, we have tried to learn the lessons from that withdrawal and apply those lessons today.

Senator MULLIN. Just—so that is a no. Just is that a no, no one has been held accountable?

Mr. CHOLLET. We have tried to learn those lessons.

Senator MULLIN. So no one has been held accountable?

Mr. CHOLLET. We tried to learn lessons.

Senator MULLIN. Okay. So—well, it is not hard to really learn lessons, especially when you do a good debrief.

In fact, when I talked to you about it in my office you said, well, the chips need to lie where they may. That was your comments when I was talking to you about the—about the accountability because if we do not learn lessons then we will—we are definitely determined to make those same mistakes again.

Several times Secretary Blinken and this administration lied when they said that every American that wanted out got out. Do you believe those statements were accurate?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I do.

Senator MULLIN. Oh, you do? Well, then why was there hundreds of Americans that got out and, by the way, the night of the 29th—the 28th and 20—and the 30th I was—I was assisting trying to get those Americans out when you guys said that every American that wanted out could get out.

But the truth is the Abbey Gate after the bombing HKIA was closed and you know this as a fact. No one was getting in to HKIA.

They were getting turned around—turned away. In fact, the morning of the 30th—and this is recorded on your hotline that you set up for Afghanistan—I was asked because I had a 3-year-old-girl plus I had Mariam and her three children plus a whole host of other people that we were trying to get in, and all night of the 29th you guys were taking me from gate to gate to gate to gate to gate to gate trying to get these individuals in HKIA, and all that had to be said was that you guys had to call over to the gate and ask for them because we were dealing with the Taliban.

See, the Taliban, ironically enough, if we paid them enough money we could get Americans out but the State Department was stopping us every step of the way.

The morning of the 30th your employee at the State Department asked me personally, do you have another way to get them out because we have closed the airport.

So for you to sit there and say that every American who wanted to get out you are absolutely lying and you know that to be factual and you say it with a straight face.

What is bad is that 3-year-old girl we were trying to get out died a few days later from a leg infection and you all knew about it because I sent you pictures of it that is still on my phone—was why I said it was important that we got her out through HKIA because she needed serious medical attention.

By the way, this was not a refugee. This was an American citizen and her parents were American citizens and you all knew this to be factual. Then when we drive her across the country and we get her to the border to Tajikistan your Ambassador, Ambassador Pommersheim, which this is also recorded, told me personally, I was told by

Washington, DC, not to assist you in any way.

Who told him that?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, thanks for the question and thank you—

Senator MULLIN. No. No. I want to know who told him that. I do not have much time. I do not want you to—I do not want you to try to get around it. Who told him that?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I do not know the details of that so—

Senator MULLIN. Well, the State Department said it. Has he been held accountable? Because that 3-year-old died because of her leg infection before we could get her across the border.

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, again, I appreciate what you did to help many of the—

Senator MULLIN. No, I do not want that. I do not need that. I do not need that. I want accountability. I want someone to be held accountable. Because you know what happened after that 3-year-old girl died and I called you guys and I said that she died?

I hung up the phone and we went black as a team and we quit communicating with you and 3 days later you guys—the State Department—released my photo and my approximate location to the Washington Post and said I was lost in Afghanistan with a bag of cash and never called my family to see if that was true. Never called my wife.

You guys released it to a political rag and they ran it and they put my life in serious danger, including the entire team that was trying to get the Americans out that you guys left behind and not one single person has been held accountable.

Then when Mariam and her three kids from Arlington—from Amarillo, Texas, when we finally got them out across the border of Tajikistan without your all's help because you guys refused to help us because you told the Ambassador not to assist us in any way, Secretary Blinken, the person who was advising, goes to the podium and says the State Department has successfully negotiated to get the first Americans out since the fall of Afghanistan.

I did not know you guys were there when she had a gun held to her hand with her 2-year-old in her arms and she started puking because she was so scared. I did not know you guys were helping that. I did not know you guys were making a single phone call.

I did not know you guys were there paying off the Taliban with that bag of cash that you said I had in my hands. I did not know

you guys were there, and you are going to tell me that you cannot say if someone has been held accountable or not?

Chairman REED. Senator Mullin, your time has expired.

Senator MULLIN. There is a problem here and there is zero chance I support you moving forward.

Chairman REED. Let me now recognize Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. We are the Senate Armed Services Committee. It is not you guys and us guys. We are Americans.

Senator MULLIN.

[Off mic.]

Senator KAINE. We are Americans. This Committee, we are all Americans. We might have different political parties and different political views.

Criticism is an American right and we ought to be critical when we need to be, and we can have different views about what criticisms are fair or not. But it is not you guys and us guys in this room. We are—we are all Americans trying to serve the public and I hope we will act that way.

I do think the discussion about lessons learned from Afghanistan cannot just be punted to a commission that is going to come back with answers later because we have spent a lot of time around this Committee table and we have views. I am not an expert.

For those who want to read the report that has been provided by State to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee members who are not on the Committee probably did not know that report had been provided. I think you are entitled to it.

So you should just ask to see that report and if any of you have a challenge getting it Senator Shaheen and I and Senator Rounds are on the Foreign Relations Committee. Come to us and we will go to bat for you.

A lot of reports are out there that we can see but you never know that it has been given to another committee. Well, now we do now that has been provided to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and if folks want to read it ask to see it and if you have trouble come to the SFRC members and we will work to make sure that you see it.

The mistakes that seem the most obvious ones to me and, yet, we need to dig into it even further, the mistakes that seem as obvious is, one, President Trump should never have negotiated a peace deal with the Taliban and cut out the Afghan Government.

It basically threw them under the bus. It committed to a deal that they had no ownership in, that they found to be unacceptable, and that caused a huge loss of Afghan morale for the United States to negotiate a withdrawal with the Taliban without including the Afghan Government.

Who thought that was a good idea? Who came up with that idea of not inviting the Afghan Government to participate in the withdrawal agreement?

Then the second agreement that goes more on the Biden administration's shoulders is there were a variety of scenarios presented to the administration about the Afghan military's capacity and how strong they would be.

Some were really pessimistic, some were kind of middle of the road, and some were quite optimistic, and what we heard from the

DOD and administration witnesses who came before us were the optimistic ones, that the Afghan military would be very strong.

We now know that the administration was being given pessimistic estimates as well, and when you get a range of estimates you should not just accept the rosy one and I think that was, clearly, a mistake.

Now, even with those mistakes if there had been a proposal before this Committee or before Congress to do what would have had to be done to stay longer—put more American troops in—I cannot imagine that would have gotten support on either side of the aisle in this Committee, in Congress, either house. That would have been necessary to stay longer.

But the rosy scenarios about what the Afghan military would do probably led to some mistakes at the end. I mean, that—we should have planned on a worst case scenario, not on a rosy case scenario, and I think that was—that was a mistake and I think we got to own it because people who are watching at home they do not want to just see, well, you know, we will have a commission that will come back and give us some recommendations down the road.

So, anyway, to my Committee Members if you want to see the report that has been given to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee ask for it and if you have trouble getting it ask me and I will try to help.

Ms. Abercrombie, we talked a lot about some of the things you would focus on if confirmed. Can you expand on for my colleagues some of the acquisition strategies? You talked about error reduction incentive structures for the contracting process. Can you share some of those ideas?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Thank you, Senator, for the question and thanks for the time in your office the other week.

Senator, if confirmed I think I have got a few priorities and that would be certainly making sure we get equipment at speed and scale to the warfighter and so that does look to reduce timelines both by ensuring we are using the flexible acquisition authorities that have been provided by Congress and the new acquisition pathways that have been implemented by DOD.

It is making sure we are training the workforce properly to apply all those and make sure that that is—it is being applied across the department, sharing lessons learned and also reducing the barriers to the nontraditional suppliers, making sure we have competition in the marketplace, so to speak, attracting smaller businesses, disadvantaged—traditionally disadvantaged businesses, et cetera, potentially by reducing regulatory barriers and making sure those pathways are clear.

Senator KAINE. I look forward to working with you on those and supporting both your nominations.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator BUDD, please?

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, again, both of you all thank you for being here. Congrats on your nominations.

Mr. Chollet, I would like to do a bit of a quick round, if you would, on a range of topics so if you would keep your answers rather short.

Assistant Secretary Wallander and General Cavoli, they are on the record stating that 2 percent of GDP is no longer a sufficient spending goal for NATO. Do you agree?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, thank you for the question. Thanks for the time in your office the other day.

I do agree. The new NATO agreement at the Vilnius Summit is that 2 percent is the floor, not the ceiling, for defense spending for our NATO allies.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. So one of the criticisms of ongoing support to Ukraine is the potential tradeoff of munitions that we are sending compared to what Taiwan requires to defend itself from an increasingly aggressive China.

So, if confirmed, do you commit to reviewing this and providing your best policy advice as secretary as well as to Congress?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes, Senator. Absolutely.

Senator BUDD. If you determine that such tradeoffs exist do you commit to working with your colleagues, particularly the under secretary for acquisitions and sustainment, to request both the resources and authorities necessary to meet our defense requirements and commitments including maximizing existing production lines and/or increasing production lines of critical munitions?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes, Senator. Absolutely.

Senator BUDD. So in the fiscal year 2017 NDAA Congress included Section 922 to enhance or upgrade the assistant secretary of defense for special operations in low-intensity conflict.

It upgraded their responsibilities to be more like those of a service secretary. So, if confirmed, do you commit to take actions necessary to fully implement Section 922, yes or no?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes, Senator. I look forward to, if confirmed, working to implement that and working with you on that.

Senator BUDD. Thank you.

Mr. Chollet, on a different topic, you are on record stating that, and I quote—and my colleagues mentioned similar things a few moments ago—but I quote, you said it was preposterous and not supported by evidence that there is a security threat along the Southwest border. But we know now that that is objectively false.

So earlier this week Customs and Border Protection stated that there were approximately 11,000 encounters at the Southwest border in a 24-hour span, making it the single highest day in recent memory.

So as of July 160 migrants who matched those listed on the terrorist watch list have been apprehended crossing the United States-Mexico border during 2023, compared to a hundred in all of 2022. That is just the ones we know about.

So would you still say that there is no security threat along the southern border?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, we need to have a safe and secure border. DOD—

Senator BUDD. Would you say that there is no security threat along the Southwest border, sir?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe there are security threats across the Southwest border, which is why we need a safe and secure border, yes.

Senator BUDD. But at one point you said it is preposterous and not supported by evidence that there is a security threat. So you do not agree with your prior statement?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I do not recall the specific example or that quote or what the security threat in question was being—I was being asked.

But what I can tell you is if confirmed I believe we need to have a safe and secure border and if confirmed I will work to ensure that DOD is playing its role.

Senator BUDD. You believe that there is a security threat along the Southwest border as of now?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe that Secretary Austin was absolutely correct to add additional DOD resources—

Senator BUDD. I am just—sir, I am just asking you would you believe that there is no security threat along the Southwest border as of right now?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe that there is a threat that warrants the deployment of United States Active Duty troops to the border, which Secretary Austin has done.

Senator BUDD. Let me broaden the aperture a bit. So is—it is a basic matter of sovereignty for nations to secure their border. Do you agree?

Mr. CHOLLET. Absolutely.

Senator BUDD. I understand that you would prefer not to send troops to the border so that we can maintain readiness to respond to the military threats posed by China, Russia, and other bad actors.

But until the Biden administration prioritizes border security I believe it is a necessity, do you not believe, to secure our southern border?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, thanks for the question. I believe we need to have a safe and secure border, full stop.

Senator BUDD. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Budd.

Senator Duckworth, please?

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to our witnesses.

I want to take this opportunity to reinforce the importance of our support for Ukraine. I attended a very important briefing on Ukraine with members of this Committee yesterday and I believe that the United States continue—it is vital that the United States continue to support the Ukrainian people against unprovoked Russian aggression and I urge my colleagues to consider how important assistance to Ukraine is to our national security.

Putin and the rest of the world are watching our actions and any failure of this Congress to continue appropriating funds to support Ukraine's defenses will have consequences throughout the world including right here at home, and if we fail to support Ukraine Putin will learn the lesson that he can do whatever he wants.

Others will learn that same lesson as well. That makes the world a less safe place, a less free place, and that impacts our economy and our national security.

Our allies are providing immense support to Ukraine right now but they are watching what we do closely. If we retreat early we are jeopardizing the war effort and playing into Putin's hands.

Ms. Abercrombie, if confirmed your position would be responsible for working with other interagency partners to deliver vital defense capabilities to Ukraine, and, Mr. Chollet, you would become the lead architect of DOD policy, if confirmed.

Can both of you speak to the importance of our assistance to Ukraine's war effort as well as to United States national security?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Senator Duckworth, thank you for that important question.

As President Biden has said, we want to—we will support Ukraine for as long as it takes and then from the Defense Department perspective that certainly includes contracting and getting the equipment to Ukraine.

So, if confirmed, I would work very closely with interagency partners and across the department, importantly, to make sure as Congress has appropriated the dollars we are getting things on contract as quickly as possible.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator Duckworth, thank you for the question. Thanks for the time in your office a few weeks ago.

Fully agree with my colleague here and fully agree with the thrust of your statement on the importance of Ukraine winning. It is a very simple proposition, from my perspective.

If Russia were to stop fighting the war would end. If Ukraine were to stop fighting Ukraine would end, and I think it is in our national security interest to continue to provide significant support to Ukraine.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

Earlier this year I introduced the Southeast Asia Partnership Expansion Act and secured its inclusion into the Senate version of fiscal year 2024 NDAA. My bill expands the military's cybersecurity partnership with Southeast Asian partners that I created in 2020.

Based on the success of that program in Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam for cybersecurity training and partnership with the United States I am now seeking to include the Philippines and Malaysia into the program.

Additionally, I recently led a CODEL to Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines to strengthen ties and reinforce support between Southeast Asia and the United States.

During my trip I spoke with U.S. servicemembers advising partner militaries in the region and heard that there is a huge demand for additional training that could increase interoperability like English language training.

In fact, they mentioned the fact that they have had some of their candidates returned from the U.S. military academy because they failed the English language test three times, and this was a very capable officer and yet could not pass the English language test.

Mr. Chollet, how important are programs like English language training and basic cybersecurity training for interoperability and what other ideas do you have to build our interoperability in the region?

Mr. CHOLLET. Thank you, Senator Duckworth, and thanks for your championing the importance of Southeast Asia. As we have discussed many times, it has been a priority for the Biden administration.

It has been a priority for me personally and in the last two and a half years at the State Department I have done around eight trips to Southeast Asia because I believe those partners are critically important to our national security and our posture in the Indo-Pacific.

I think we have made some very, very important strides in deepening those relationships but I think there is much further to go and I would—if confirmed, would look forward to work with you closely on some of the innovative ideas you and others have had on a way we can deepen those partnerships.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. So, if confirmed, will you work with me to help secure funding authorities and resources for some of these ideas in future years?

Mr. CHOLLET. Absolutely, Senator. I would like to work with you on that. Thank you.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

Yes, because I want to ensure that we are prioritizing and adequately resourcing programs that can build on these ties in Southeast Asia.

If confirmed, Mr. Chollet, how do you plan on using your diplomatic experience gained during your time at the State Department to shape the DOD's policy on building relationships with partners in the Indo-Pacific region, specifically Southeast Asia?

Mr. CHOLLET. Thank you, Senator Duckworth, for the question.

As I said earlier, I believe that what I call defense diplomacy is a critical part of the job of Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and if confirmed I would seek to pursue that and work with my colleagues as well who are doing that.

These relationships and partnerships are critically important to our security. They are a force multiplier for us. They are part of our enduring advantage and they are at the heart of our National Defense Strategy.

So whatever we can do to make those alliances and partnerships stronger is something that I am going to set out to do.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Duckworth.

Senator Schmitt, please?

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chollet, what did you mean when you told the New York Times that the Army in particular is a pretty bubba-oriented system?

Mr. CHOLLET. Thanks, Senator Schmitt, for the question. I really appreciate it.

As I mentioned earlier, I was referring to the importance of mentorship and leadership. It was sort of a colloquial way to say that mentors and leaders really matter.

Senator SCHMITT. Well, you could have said that but you did not. The Merriam-Webster defines it as—very simply as redneck and offers that the term is, quote, “informal and often disparaging.” It

also cites the word's origin as a, quote, "stereotypical nickname of Southern white males."

Do you understand how that might be offensive?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do, Senator, and that was certainly not my intent in using that.

Senator SCHMITT. Right. You are asking to be promoted to the No. 3 position at the Department of Defense. There are recruitment challenges. I am sure that there are Southern white males who might like to join the military. Do you think this is helpful in that recruitment effort?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I think the most important thing we can do to have good recruitment is ensuring that we have good strong leadership, which was the point I was trying to make.

Senator SCHMITT. Right. Do you think lobbing a slur their way is helpful with that?

Mr. CHOLLET. As I said, Senator, that was certainly not my intent.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay.

In your book "The Middle Way" you said that—you noted that systemic racism has been a problem in this mostly white and male establishment for a long time, referring to the foreign policy establishment.

Do you believe that the State Department is systemically racist?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I do not.

Senator SCHMITT. Do you believe that the Department of Defense is systemically racist?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I do not.

Senator SCHMITT. Do you believe that our armed services are systemically racist?

Mr. CHOLLET. Absolutely not.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. I want to turn your attention to another topic. You are familiar with the department's Global Engagement Center?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Department of State's Global Engagement—yes, I am.

Senator SCHMITT. Yes, yes, and working with the Election Integrity Project?

Mr. CHOLLET. Only vaguely familiar with that, Senator.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. Well, it happens to be that in the *Missouri v. Biden* lawsuit that I happen to know something about as Missouri's attorney general the State Department was specifically part of this in their effort to censor Americans.

Judge Doughty in his order when he issued the injunction noted that the Election Integrity Project, all 21 of the repeat spreaders of so-called disinformation were conservative or right-wing political—had conservative or right-wing political views and supported President Trump.

Of those 21 included President Trump, Eric Trump, Breitbart News, and Sean Hannity. I want to ask you, do you think that the Government should be telling Americans what they can see or what they can hear or what they can say?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, thanks for the question.

What I can say is I know the work of the Global Engagement Center at the Department of State is critically important as we seek to fight disinformation, misinformation, around the world.

I do not know the specifics of this incident. So I would be happy to take this back and get back to you on a more fulsome answer.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. So how would you combat—what would you say is the best way to combat information that you deem to be not accurate? What would be the way to do that?

Mr. CHOLLET. Well, first, when it comes to foreign source misinformation, I mean, exposing a foreign source—

Senator SCHMITT. Well, I am—let us say—let us talk about political viewpoints of Americans because that is really what this case is about.

What is the best way to do that?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, again, I am not familiar with this case specifically—

Senator SCHMITT. No, I am just asking your opinion. If you—if there was an American, let us say the President of the United States or a news outlet or somebody—a resident of the State of Missouri had a viewpoint that you thought was inaccurate what is the best way for you as a government actor to deal with that?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, it is not something I am particularly qualified to opine on. But I would say that—

Senator SCHMITT. Well, you were a senior member of the State Department when they actively engaged in censorship, according to the judge.

Mr. CHOLLET. As I said, Senator, I am not familiar with this case. I would be happy to take this back and get back to you on a more fulsome answer.

Senator SCHMITT. Do you believe that the government should collude with big tech companies to censor speech?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I do not.

Senator SCHMITT. You are aware that that was actually the finding of the court, right?

Mr. CHOLLET. As I said, I am not familiar with this case.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay.

Well, I am informing you and I will be happy to followup, but the judge's ruling found that the State Department through this election integrity initiative was censoring Americans, threatening legal action if they did not censor Americans, threatening antitrust investigations if they did not censor Americans.

I find that this activity that is not talked about a lot up here is—could be devastating to the fundamental right of free speech in this country, and the fact that people have the right to speak their minds even if you do not agree with it, even if you think it is an accurate, the best way to deal with that is more information.

So I would encourage as you go back to the State Department or whoever you talk to that is legit. But working to censor the government has zero business—zero business—telling Americans what they can say, what they can hear, what they can think, and they also cannot outsource that censorship to big tech giants, which is exactly what happened here, and I am troubled by the fact that you were center stage in this.

Your comments that we talked about aside, the State Department was actively working with big tech giants to shut down American speech. Your testimony here does not give me any greater comfort as you are seeking a promotion.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman REED. Thank you, Senator Schmitt.

Senator Sullivan, please?

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to our nominees thank you and thank your families for service. Your kids are doing well there, Mr. Chollet. So a long hearing.

I appreciated our meeting the other day and let me—let me ask you directly the question that I ask, what is the number-one goal for the Department of Defense?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, thank you very much and I very much appreciate the meeting the other day and the conversation we had on a whole range of issues.

The number-one goal of the Department of Defense is to make sure that we have a force that is lethal, that is precise, and that establishes robust deterrence, and we want our adversaries—

Senator SULLIVAN. To win—and to win wars if we are—our troops are called?

Mr. CHOLLET. Absolutely.

Senator SULLIVAN. To win wars.

Mr. CHOLLET. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. So here is a big issue, and you saw the frustration from Senator Schmitt and I am going to talk about it. I think our civilian leadership at the Pentagon, a lot of them, particularly your predecessor, pushed an agenda that had a lot—that in many ways had nothing to do with that. You and I talked about this yesterday.

Look, it was a very legitimate line of questioning, sadly, because 3 years ago your predecessor was here in this confirmation hearing—the under secretary for policy, who in my view was a political hack—a political hack—and one of his opening statements said his goal was to, quote, “stamp out systemic racism within the ranks of the military.”

I said, wow, that is a pretty damning question to the ranks of the military. You ever served in the military, Mr. Secretary—Mr. Professor? No, Senator. Do you have any data backing that up that we have systemic racism within the ranks of the military? No, Senator.

So let us just be—I want to get this directly. Do you think that the U.S. military, one of the most admirable civil rights organizations in U.S. history, has systemic racism within the ranks and do we need to stamp that out, as your predecessor said in his confirmation hearing? Do you agree with him?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, as we discussed yesterday in your office, I do not believe that—

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay. That was an insult to our troops and the guy went on to be the number-three guy in the Pentagon. Do you want to apologize, perhaps, for that even though you did not say it?

Do you understand why that is just insulting to the men and women who serve in the military? Do you understand? Do you un-

derstand why Senator Schmitt gets upset about this—I get upset about it? I was really mad at the previous under secretary.

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I fully understand.

Senator SULLIVAN. Do you think—would you want to apologize on his behalf?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, it was not my statement to make. I can just tell you my views.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay. Well, look, it is good that if you are confirmed that we have an under secretary that actually respects the troops, does not disparage them without any data. Kahl was supposed to come back to me with his data. He never did. Never had it.

Let me ask another agenda that is being pushed. Do you believe—the Secretary of the Navy got his climate change action plan to this Committee 18 months ago, got his warfighting shipbuilding plan the night of his posture hearing 2 months ago.

What is more important, war fighting and shipbuilding for the U.S. Navy or their climate action plan?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I would say——

Senator SULLIVAN. Just answer it directly. It is an easy question. You should just give me the right answer.

Mr. CHOLLET. I would say they are both important but what is the most important is getting you responses in a timely fashion, which I commit to doing.

Senator SULLIVAN. Well, no, I am talking about building ships and warfighting or some, you know, nebulous climate plan for the U.S. Navy. What is more important for the U.S. Navy? Come on, Mr. Secretary, this is not a hard question. Just——

Mr. CHOLLET. We need to have——

Senator SULLIVAN. I know your minders are watching and everything. But this is what we need you to do is be strong when you get the woke part of the military trying to shove all this stuff down the throats of the Pentagon.

It is warfighting and shipbuilding for the Secretary of the Navy, is it not? Is not that more of a priority than climate change?

Mr. CHOLLET. Warfighting is absolutely critical and having a capable Navy is absolutely critical. If confirmed, I will do whatever I can do to make sure——

Senator SULLIVAN. More important than climate change?

Mr. CHOLLET. I think climate change is absolutely critical as well. The National Defense Strategy calls——

Senator SULLIVAN. So equally important? Come on.

Mr. CHOLLET. They are both——

Senator SULLIVAN. This is not hard, right, and this is why I worry about Biden administration officials who are civilian nominees coming in. This is an easy question. Of course, it is war fighting and shipbuilding. Just answer it.

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, again, as I said to you in your office, I think we need to be getting you your—these responses in a timely fashion. That is the bottom line for me whether it is about climate change or the Navy or the Air Force or anything else.

Senator SULLIVAN. So this answer—this exchange is very disappointing because part of—the biggest concern that so many of us have is the civilians at the Pentagon are shoving down a system

of values that do not relate to warfighting, do not relate to lethality.

Let me give you another question. This President has put forward a budget 3 years in a row that shrinks the Army, shrinks the Navy, shrinks the Marine Corps, shrinks the budget.

Each year the President has put forward inflation-adjusted cuts and next year the Biden budget will take us below 3 percent of GDP for military spending. I looked it up. That will only be the fourth time in 70 years.

Yet, everybody comes before this Committee and says it is the most dangerous period since World War II and the President continually puts forward budgets to cut defense spending. We will be below 3 percent next year, I think the fifth time in 70 years.

What is your sense on where the budget should be? Do you agree with the President of the United States that we should be cutting the budget?

That is where he has put forward his budget and the current budget shrinks the Army, shrinks the Navy, shrinks the Marine Corps. Is that the signal we want to send to Xi Jinping and Putin?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I believe we need to have a robust defense budget. If confirmed, I am going to work to see the Defense Department get as much resources as it can.

I, of course, support the administration's budget submission to you but if confirmed would look forward to working with Congress to see whatever we can do to get the warfighter what they need.

Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chairman, I have a couple additional questions, if I may, if there is no one else here—a second round. This is a really important position and—

Chairman REED. I would ask, Senator, to just direct your questions and do so as succinctly as possible.

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

Yesterday I brought to the Senate floor my bill to pay our military if there is a government shutdown. This bill would say, hey, even if there is a government shutdown we are going to pay the men and women of the U.S. military because they are not going to get a day off even if there is a government shutdown.

Do you support that bill to pay our—

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, I—

Senator SULLIVAN.—to pay our troops if there is a government shut down?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do not know the specifics of that bill. But, absolutely, we need to ensure that our national security needs are being taken care of and, hopefully, we can do that by avoiding a shutdown.

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes, I agree. I hope we avoid a shutdown, too.

On Ukraine—you and I talked about this. I have been a supporter of Ukraine. You said if aid was cutoff it would be devastating. I have been supporting Ukraine aid.

However, there has been a pattern within this administration, and a lot of it was—the blame was pinned on your predecessor—is that almost every weapon systems—it is a long list—HIMARS, Stingers, Javelins, Patriots, F-16s, tanks—the administration has said, we are not sure we are going to do that—there is a self-deterrence.

You know, Under Secretary Kahl would say, well, that might make Putin mad. And then we, this Committee in particular—Democrats and Republicans—pressure, pressure, pressure, pressure, and you finally relent.

Now, that is really hurting the war effort and it frustrates people. I think it undermines certain members' support for Ukraine.

If confirmed, can you commit to actually accelerate the ability to get the Ukrainians weapons systems and not delay it for nine, 10, 11 months? Get pressure from the Congress and then finally do it?

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, thanks for the question.

As we discussed in your office, if confirmed I will move heaven and earth to get the Ukrainians what they need when they need it.

We need to think about what they can operate, what they can maintain, and what would be most effective in the fight.

We need Ukraine to win so I would see it as one of my top priorities to ensure that we are getting Ukraine what it needs.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask just a few more quick questions and maybe we will just get commitments for you on the record. I care a lot about the Arctic. America has strategic—strong strategic interests in the Arctic.

You may have seen in August Chinese and Russians sent a joint naval patrol of 11 warships off the coast of my State, Alaska. We are an Arctic nation because of Alaska.

The Pentagon, in my view, has been the last agency in D.C. to understand the strategic interests of the Arctic. This Committee has pressed the Pentagon for almost a decade to focus on it more.

Can you give me your views on the strategic imperative and interests we have as an Arctic nation in the Arctic?

Mr. CHOLLET. Absolutely, Senator, and thank you for focusing so much on this issue. It is an issue that I have worked on quite a bit in the last year at the Pentagon—or at, sorry, the State Department and if I am confirmed to go to the Pentagon I would carry that forward.

My understanding is the Defense Department is working on a new Arctic strategy which is going to nest under the National Strategy for the Arctic that was released last year.

Arctic is critically important to us and we have seen Russia but then, of course, the PRC is doing more and more in the Arctic and I would urge my colleagues at the Defense Department, if confirmed, that we are going to do more on that.

Senator SULLIVAN. If confirmed, can you give us more information—

Chairman REED. Senator Sullivan, your second round time has expired.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay. My last question, and this is just a quick question, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your—

Chairman REED. Indulgence.

Senator SULLIVAN.—indulgence. That is the term I was looking for.

Chairman REED. Yes. Fine.

Senator SULLIVAN. The Chinese spy balloon incident—as you know, a lot of that took place over Alaska. We have gotten essen-

tially zero information on the aftermath of that. Maybe a lot of it is classified.

Can you confirm to brief this Committee soon what are the results of that, what happened, what was it when we shot it down, shot it down over Alaska? Two of those aircraft shot it down over the Carolina coast.

Can you confirm to give us a detailed briefing on all of that? The Pentagon has kind of gone silent and these are really important issues.

Mr. CHOLLET. Senator, thanks for raising the question. If confirmed, I will absolutely dig into that and get you the information you need.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence.

Chairman REED. Thank you very much, Senator Sullivan, for your questions.

And Mr. Chollet and Ms. Abercrombie, thank you for your testimony.

I have two administrative issues. One is I would like to submit to the record a letter signed by 35 senior national security professionals in the past four Republican administrations on behalf of Mr. Chollet, including among them is James A. Baker, who was the most outstanding civil servants we have ever had in this country.

Without objection, so ordered.

[The information referred to follows:]

September 12, 2023

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed:

We are national security professionals who have worked as senior political appointees for Republican Presidents or Republican Members of Congress. We have known or worked with Derek Chollet during his long career in Washington and can attest to his commitment to advancing US interests and protecting our national security. While we don't agree with him on every policy issue — and in some instances, we seriously disagree — we respect his deep experience, spirit of bipartisanship, integrity, and dedication to public service. He has our full support to be the next Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy is among the most important national security positions in the Executive Branch. With the United States facing arguably the most complex set of national security challenges it has ever faced, we believe this position should be filled as soon as possible. Derek Chollet is highly qualified, and we respectfully ask the US Senate to consider his nomination swiftly and act on his confirmation favorably.

Michael Allen
Former Senior Director and Special Asst to the President for Counterproliferation Strategies

Rich Armitage
Former Deputy Secretary of State

James A. Baker
Former Secretary of State

Stephen E. Biegun
Former Deputy Secretary of State

Christian Brose
Former Staff Director, Senate Armed Services Committee

Dr. Victor Cha
Former National Security Council staff

Dr. Eliot A. Cohen
Former Counselor of the Department of State

Amb. Paula Dobriansky
Former Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs

Amb. Eric Edelman
Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

Daniel Fata
Former Deputy Assistant SecDef for Europe and NATO Policy

Dr. Peter Feaver
Former Special Advisor for Strategic Planning and Institutional Reform, NSC staff

Jamie Fly
Former President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Richard Fontaine
Former Foreign Policy Advisor to Senator John McCain

Dr. Michael Green
Former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Asia

Stephen J. Hadley
Former National Security Advisor

John Hannah
Former Assistant to the Vice President for National Security Affairs

Dr. William Inboden
Former Senior Director for Strategic Planning, NSC staff

Amb. Kenneth I. Juster
Former U.S. Ambassador to India

Amb. Zafar Khalilzad
Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Iraq and Afghanistan

Amb. Robert Kimmitt
Former Deputy Secretary of the Treasury

David J. Kramer
Former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights & Labor

Dr. Paul Lettow
Former Senior Director for Strategic Planning, National Security Council staff

Mary Beth Long
Former Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs

Amb. John Negroponte
First Director of National Intelligence and former Deputy Secretary of State

Dr. Meghan L. O'Sullivan
Former Deputy National Security Advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan

Eric Sayers
Former Professional Staff Member, Senate Armed Services Committee

Randy Scheunemann
Former Adviser on National Security, Senate Majority Leader

Amb. Kristen Silverberg
Former U.S. Ambassador to the European Union

Amb. John Sullivan
Former Deputy Secretary of State

Amb. Kurt Volker
Former U.S. Ambassador to NATO

Dr. Dov S. Zakheim
Former Under Secretary of Defense

Roger Zakheim
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense

Dr. Philip Zelikow
Former Counselor of the Department of State

Amb. Robert B. Zoellick
Former U.S. Trade Representative and Deputy Secretary of State

Chairman REED. Now, when I asked you, Mr. Chollet and Ms. Abercrombie, the standard nominee questions at the beginning of this hearing I inadvertently included a question asked only of military nominees.

That question was, quote, "Do you agree when asked before this Committee to give your personal views even if your views differ from the administration?"

This question and your answer do not apply to your positions and I ask that the record reflect this fact, and without objection the record will reflect this fact.

Thank you very much. You have both demonstrated your capability. I look forward to seeing your confirmation and getting you to lead the Department of Defense.

With that, I would recess the hearing

[Whereupon, at 11:50 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Prepared questions submitted to The Honorable Derek H. Chollet by Chairman Reed prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

DUTIES, QUALIFICATIONS, CHALLENGES, PRIORITIES

Question. What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P))?

Answer. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) serves as principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense on all matters regarding the formulation of national security and defense strategy and policy and the integration and oversight of DOD policy, strategy, plans, execution, and capabilities to achieve national security objectives. Under the USD(P)'s Title 10 authority, he/she is the principal staff assistant to the Secretary of Defense responsible for development, implementation, and integration of the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and strategic policy guidance for DOD activities across all geographic regions, military functions, and domains. The USD(P) is responsible for building, managing, and maintaining U.S. defense relationships with allies, partners, competitors, and international organizations. Among other duties, the USD(P) serves as a statutory member of the Nuclear Weapons Council.

Question. If confirmed, what additional duties and responsibilities do you expect that the Secretary of Defense would prescribe for you?

Answer. If confirmed, I expect the Secretary of Defense would have me serve as principal advisor on all matters regarding the formulation of national security and defense strategy and policy. In addition, I would expect the Secretary would assign me other duties as appropriate, such as representing the Department of Defense at the National Security Council (NSC) Deputies Committee. If confirmed in this role, the Secretary would expect me to have good working relationships with the Combatant Commands, Military Services, and other DOD components, as well as other departments and agencies within the national security community.

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

Answer. I currently serve as Counselor of the U.S. State Department, where at the rank of Under Secretary, I advise the Secretary of State on a wide range of issues and conduct special diplomatic assignments as directed by the Secretary. In prior government service, I have held senior positions in the State Department, White House, and Department of Defense.

From 2012–2015, I served at the Pentagon as the United States Assistant Secretary of Defense (ASD) for International Security Affairs, where I managed United States defense policy toward Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Western Hemisphere and served as a close advisor to two Secretaries of Defense, Secretary Panetta and Secretary Hagel. Prior to serving as ASD, I was Senior Director for Strategic Planning on the NSC staff. From 2009 to 2011, I was the Principal Deputy Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff. During the Clinton administration, I served on the staff of Deputy Secretary of State Talbott and as chief speechwriter to United States Ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke.

Outside of government, I have held senior positions at several leading research institutions, including the German Marshall Fund, Center for a New American Security, Center for Strategic Studies, the Brookings Institution, and Kissinger Center for Global Affairs at Johns Hopkins/SAIS. I have written extensively on U.S. foreign and defense policy, specifically on Euro-Atlantic relations, Middle East policy, and the post-cold war landscape.

Question. If confirmed, what duties and responsibilities would you assign to the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy?

Answer. The Deputy Under Secretary for Policy is a key partner for the USD(P). If confirmed, I would ensure the Deputy Under Secretary and I maintain an open and collaborative working relationship on all national security and defense policy matters, in order to fulfill our roles as principal staff assistants and advisors to the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense. Regarding specifics, if I am confirmed, I will examine the roles and responsibilities in consultation with the Office of General Counsel, to ensure compliance with the law.

Question. What are the major challenges you would expect to confront if confirmed as the USD(P)?

Answer. If confirmed, one of the greatest challenges I would confront is ensuring United States national security and defense policy is adequately postured to succeed in this era of great power competition. The United States faces not only the acute threat of Russia, but also the pacing threat posed by the People's Republic of China. In addition to these and other regional competitors, threats from cyber and new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence are evolving every day. If confirmed, one of the biggest challenges would be to ensure the Department of Defense can compete and succeed in a multi-domain threat environment.

Question. If confirmed, what would your policy priorities be, and what areas of policy do you think have not been adequately emphasized or addressed by the Department of Defense (DOD)?

Answer. If confirmed, one of my first priorities would be implementation of the NDS which, in my view, builds upon the strong foundation of the 2018 NDS. Another major priority, if confirmed, would be to continue this Administration's work to provide military assistance in support of Ukraine's self-defense, including working with our allies and partners to contribute to this effort. Similarly, it's essential the United States continue its support of Taiwan, in accordance with United States law. If confirmed, I will work with the Congress to ensure that the drawdown authority you authorized for Taiwan's self-defense is utilized to address its requirements. Finally, if confirmed, I would make sure the Department of Defense is meeting its obligations to modernize our nuclear triad in order to maintain a safe, secure, and credible deterrent.

Question. How would you characterize your views regarding the appropriate posture of stationing of United States Armed Forces overseas and their use in overseas operations?

Answer. Our overseas military presence is a key component to our ability to protect and defend the Homeland. The U.S. military presence abroad contributes to assuring allies and partners of our defense commitments and shared values, as well as ensures our operational responsiveness.

CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY

Question. What is your view of the role of DOD civilian leadership, as compared to the role of the military, in the formulation of strategy and contingency planning?

Answer. Civilian control of the military reflects the values of the American people and is central to our system. The Department is led by a civilian accountable to the President, an elected official, as commander-in-chief. The Department relies on the expertise and experience of our military leaders; but, ultimately, the decisions are made by civilians who have been confirmed by the Senate.

Question. How would you define effective civilian control of the military? Aside from civilian control of the military via the executive branch, please describe the extent to which you believe Congress plays a role in furthering civilian control of our military?

Answer. Congress has a key role in the civilian control of the military, beginning with confirming leaders of the Department, appropriating funds, and conducting oversight. The annual National Defense Authorization Act, Appropriations Act, and other legislation fundamentally shape DOD's activities. Additionally, in Congress' oversight capacity, DOD is engaged daily with Congress and its staff.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would meet with other senior leaders in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the Combatant Commands to hear their perspectives. I was fortunate to have served in a DOD Policy role previously—so, I am familiar with the building and general operations—but, my role would be broader and our national security concerns have changed. Contingency plans are elemental to DOD's readiness and as the Secretary's senior policy advisor, I would speak to him regularly about those plans, if confirmed.

Question. Section 901 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020 authorized an increase in the number of personnel in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and "sunsetting" the reduction of funding mandated in section 346 of the fiscal year 2016 NDAA. It does not appear that the Department has used these additional flexibilities to increase the number of civilian billets in OSD, however.

In your view, would an increase in the number of personnel assigned to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP) enhance civilian control of the military? Please explain your answer. (OPR: PMO)

Answer. I believe in the fundamental American principle of civilian control of the military. Any potential for future marks against OUSD(P) civilian pay would jeopardize the organization's ability to recruit and retain an experienced and capable workforce that can ensure meaningful oversight of the military. If confirmed, I intend to undertake a rigorous analysis of current staffing levels to determine whether the organization has a sufficiently sized civilian staff for the current—and increasing—number of national security mission sets OUSD(P) is responsible for. If necessary, I will seek additional permanent personnel for OUSD(P) to ensure the organization can successfully carry out civilian control of the military and conduct the national security missions it is responsible for.

2022 NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY (NDS)

Question. The 2022 National Defense Strategy identifies defending the Homeland as the top defense priority.

In your view, is the Department making investments in homeland defense that are consistent with this being a top priority? What additional investments do you believe are necessary to protect the Homeland? (OPR: HDHA, OCR: SPC)

Answer. In my view, the 2022 National Defense Strategy, along with the embedded Nuclear Posture and Missile Defense Reviews, establishes an effective strategic policy framework to guide investments that will enable successful execution of the first and most important mission of the Department, defending the United States Homeland. If confirmed, I will continue to support investment in an integrated, layered defense of the Homeland, and reducing strategic risk through strengthening deterrence and enhancing resilience, in collaboration with our Allies and Partners.

Question. In your view, to what extent should the Department anticipate being called on to support civil authorities in the event of a war with a peer competitor? What investments and planning do you believe the Department should be undertaking to prepare for such a scenario? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. DOD should plan for the possibility that it will be called on to support civil authorities because incidents may occur during or as a result of the conflict. For instance, DOD supported civil authorities in responses to many natural disasters while conducting operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere from 2001 to 2021.

Of course, it is important to recognize that the U.S. Homeland is also not a sanctuary. In a conflict, we can expect our adversaries to seriously consider taking actions against the U.S. Homeland to impede U.S. decisionmaking, interfere with the deployment of U.S. Forces, and degrade our national will. DOD may be called upon to support civil authorities in these scenarios. With regard to investments, it is my understanding that DOD plans, programs, and budgets for national defense missions. DOD leverages the substantial capabilities and capacity built for national defense missions to support civil authorities.

If confirmed, I will review the DOD planning process and DOD plans to ensure that they account for such possibilities effectively.

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

Answer. I believe the 2022 NDS accurately lays out the four top priorities for the Department: defending the Homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by People's Republic of China (PRC); deterring strategic attacks against the United States, Allies, and partners; deterring aggression, while being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary—prioritizing the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific region, then the Russia challenge in Europe; and building a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem.

For the first time, the Department of Defense (DOD) conducted its strategic reviews, including the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review and 2022 Missile Defense Review, in a fully integrated way. I understand the Department developed the NDS through a process that was iterative, inclusive, and implementable, including regular and wide-ranging touchpoints with senior leaders across the DOD, interagency, and Allies and partners.

Question. If confirmed, what changes or adjustments, if any, would you recommend in the NDS? What changes or adjustments, if any, would you recommend in the Department's implementation of the NDS? (OPR: SPC)

I believe the NDS accurately identifies the key defense challenges facing the United States and the appropriate ways to respond to these challenges. I know there is much work under way in line with the NDS to modernize our military, pur-

sue advanced technologies, prioritize innovation, and invest in our defense workforce. If confirmed, I will work to ensure continued progress in all of these areas.

The Department of Defense is required to assess the NDS annually. If confirmed, I will continue the Department's commitment to thorough and ongoing assessments and make any adjustments necessary to ensure the NDS evolves in whatever ways necessary to provide for U.S. defense requirements.

Question. Do you believe that 3 to 5 percent real budgetary growth through the FYDP is required to implement the 2022 NDS effectively? Please explain your answer. (OPR: SPC)

Answer. In general, I believe that a strong defense budget is essential to our ability to implement the 2022 NDS.

I understand that for fiscal year 2024, the Department has requested a \$26.0 billion budget increase, representing a 3.2 percent increase over the fiscal year 2023 enacted base level of \$816.0 billion and a 13.4 percent increase from the fiscal year 2022 base level. I believe these increases address both the urgency of 2022 NDS implementation and recent inflationary impacts.

United States competitors—especially our pacing challenge, the PRC—continue to expand their capabilities to challenge the United States. Deterring aggression by these actors requires investments in United States innovation, acquisitions, and the DOD workforce. The budget request the Department has put forward makes these necessary investments. The fiscal year 2024 budget request for procurement and research and development totaling \$315 billion, for example, is the largest in the history of the Department and ensures combat-credible forces across all domains.

While resourcing levels are critical, much depends on how the Department prioritizes investments. Under any resourcing level, the Department must continue to focus investments in line with the 2022 National Defense Strategy.

Question. Looking forward, what types of resource shortfalls, if any, are likely to hamper the Department's execution of the 2022 NDS and other national defense priorities, in your view? How would you address or mitigate these shortfalls, if confirmed? (Review: SPC)

Answer. In general, I believe that a strong defense budget is essential to our ability to implement the 2022 NDS. Although resourcing levels are critical, much also depends on how the Department prioritizes investments. Under any resourcing level, the Department must continue to focus investments in line with the 2022 National Defense Strategy.

GLOBAL FORCE POSTURE

Question. What is your assessment of the adequacy of the current U.S. global defense posture, particularly as it relates to stationing U.S. Military Forces overseas, and where would you look to increase or decrease U.S. Force posture overseas given current international security dynamics? (Review: SPC)

Answer. I believe DOD has a strong global posture. If confirmed, I am committed to continue the Department's efforts to enhance U.S. Force posture globally, in locations and with Allies and partners that support our ability to project integrated deterrence, campaign day-to-day to gain and sustain military advantages, and prevail in conflict, if necessary.

Building the necessary force posture, including infrastructure, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, will require funding, manpower, and specialized requirements. If confirmed, I am committed to working with Congress, other Federal departments and agencies, and Allies and partners, to ensure the Department has the critical resources we require to enhance and sustain posture, presence, and readiness around the world.

Question. In your view, what role do forward-stationed forces play in implementing the NDS and what is the proper balance between forward-stationed, rotationally deployed, and surge forces in executing our defense strategy? (Review: SPC)

DOD relies on a balance of forward-stationed and rotationally deployed forces to meet our NDS objectives and mission requirements on a daily basis. In this changing global security environment, the proper balance among forward-stationed, rotationally deployed, and surge forces will vary. I would want to work closely with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as he advances global force management recommendations to the Secretary.

Question. Mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships are crucial to U.S. success in competition and conflict against a strategic power. If confirmed, what U.S. alliances and partnerships would you consider most critical and what new partnerships would you pursue in each Combatant Commander's area of responsibility?

Answer. U.S. alliances and partnerships are one of our unparalleled advantages over our competitors, and this Administration is doing more than ever to bolster them around the world. If confirmed, I would want to work with the Department on how to improve our already strong standing with Allies and partners to reflect the priorities of the National Defense Strategy.

Question. In your view, in the event of a major conflict with a strategic competitor such as China or Russia, what component of DOD would be responsible for real time management of the resulting impacts and necessary adjustments to global force posture? Is that DOD component adequately resourced and structured to react at the speed of relevance? (OPR: SPC)

Answer. In the event of a major conflict with a peer or near-peer competitor, the Department would use standing processes as well as emergent senior leader fora to manage the defense approach, resulting impacts, and necessary adjustments to global force posture at the speed of relevance. This includes utilization of long-standing global force management processes, that are well functioning and adequately resourced.

NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES AND NUCLEAR POSTURE REVIEW (NPR)

Question. United States nuclear forces have not been meaningfully updated since the cold war. Currently, the U.S. is the only nuclear-armed country in the world without the ability to manufacture a fully new nuclear weapon. If these issues are not addressed, aging and attrition will cause the U.S. to lose the capabilities that have deterred nuclear attacks and major conflict for over 70 years—all while each of our major nuclear-armed adversaries are expanding and modernizing their own forces.

What is your understanding of the State of U.S. nuclear forces, its global nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) architecture, and the supporting weapons sustainment and production capabilities within the National Nuclear Security Administration? (Review: SPACE)

Answer. As Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks have testified, nuclear deterrence is a top priority for the Department. I am confident that our nuclear capabilities remain safe, secure, and effective today, but as stated in the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review, much of our nuclear weapons stockpile, delivery systems, and supporting capabilities have aged without comprehensive refurbishment and require continued investment to modernize. It is vital that we maintain a credible nuclear posture backed by a balanced and flexible nuclear stockpile.

Question. Do you agree with Secretary Austin that nuclear deterrence is DOD's highest priority mission and that modernizing each leg of the nuclear triad and the Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons complex is a critical national security priority? (Review: SPACE)

Answer. Yes, I agree with Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks that modernization of the nuclear triad, as well as our NC3 architecture and the National Nuclear Security Administration complex, is critical to U.S. national security and should remain a top priority for the Department.

Question. What is your understanding of how Russia, China, and North Korea have expanded or modernized their nuclear force capabilities? (Review: SPACE)

Answer. I am concerned by the PRC's nuclear force expansion and diversification, as well as by Russia's continued emphasis on nuclear weapons in its strategy and North Korea's continued expansion and diversification of its nuclear forces. We face a significant challenge with two nuclear peers. The pace and scale of China's nuclear development is troubling. The intelligence community estimates that China's nuclear arsenal may exceed 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030 and 1,500 by 2035—rough parity with the United States. Russia's conventional force is suffering significant losses in Ukraine, potentially making Russia even more reliant on its nuclear arsenal.

I also understand that Russia has largely completed modernization of its strategic forces and is pursuing new strategic-range nuclear systems. I am also concerned by Russian assistance to the PRC's nuclear program, as well as Russia's non-compliance with the New START Treaty. If confirmed, I will continue to support the modernization of our nuclear triad and regularly reevaluate what is required to maintain a credible capability to deter strategic attacks.

Question. The last two Commanders of United States Strategic Command have concluded that reports of China's nuclear force expansion should be considered a "strategic breakout," which represents an unprecedented threat to global stability. Do you agree with this assessment? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I agree that the PRC's nuclear force expansion and diversification, as well as the PRC's lack of transparency and its growing military assertiveness in the

Indo-Pacific region, present new challenges for strategic stability. If confirmed, I will support the modernization of our nuclear triad and regularly reevaluate what is required to maintain a credible capability to deter strategic attacks, assure our Allies and partners, and meet Presidential objectives. I will also support efforts to engage the PRC on practical measures to reduce risks.

Question. In your view, do these capabilities pose an increasing threat to the United States and its Allies? (Review: SPACE)

Answer. I am aware of reports regarding the PRC's nuclear expansion. Based on my understanding of U.S. nuclear force posture, I am confident that U.S. nuclear forces remain sufficient to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats the Nation faces today and will likely face in the coming years. If confirmed, I look forward to increasing my understanding of developments regarding the PRC's nuclear expansion and potential options for the Department of the Defense to consider, consistent with existing policy and the capacity of the nuclear enterprise.

The PRC's nuclear force expansion and diversification increase the PRC's capabilities to threaten the United States and our Allies. A large and diverse nuclear arsenal could also provide the PRC with new options to leverage nuclear weapons for coercive purposes, including in the form of military provocations against our Allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I will continue to support the modernization of our nuclear triad and regularly reevaluate what is required to maintain a credible capability to deter strategic attacks, assure our Allies and partners, and meet Presidential objectives. Simultaneously I will support ongoing efforts to engage the PRC on the full range of strategic issues, including nuclear risk reduction and potential approaches to arms control.

Question. Do you believe our current deterrence policy accounts for two near peer nuclear competitors like Russia and now China? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I am confident that our existing deterrence strategy and nuclear force posture is sufficient to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats we face today and will likely face in the coming years. I agree with the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review's finding that we must carefully assess the implications of China's ongoing nuclear expansion for U.S. nuclear strategy, forces, arms control approaches, and planning for regional conflict. If confirmed, I will support efforts to assess the implications of the PRC's nuclear force expansion and diversification and will consider whether nuclear policy and other adjustments are necessary to achieve our deterrence objectives.

Question. Do you support the United States nuclear force structure changes recommended by the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review? In light of recent actions by Russia, and China emerging as a second near peer nuclear competitor, do you believe there should be additional consideration to revisions in nuclear force structure?

Answer. Yes, I support the NPR recommended force structure changes. If confirmed, I will support efforts to assess the implications of the PRC's nuclear force expansion and diversification and will consider whether nuclear force structure adjustments are necessary to achieve our deterrence and other objectives for the PRC as well as Russia and other potential nuclear-armed challengers.

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

Answer. Although I cannot speak for our Allies, I am confident that U.S. strategic nuclear forces, as well as capabilities tailored to extended deterrence, are sufficient to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats we face today and will likely face in the coming years. I agree with the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review's findings that modern, flexible, and tailorable U.S. nuclear forces are key to assuring Allies and partners that the United States is committed and capable of deterring the full range of threats they and we face.

Question. The 2010 NPR called for retaining "sufficient force structure in each leg to allow the ability to hedge effectively by shifting weight from one Triad leg to another if necessary due to unexpected technological problems or operational vulnerabilities."

Do you agree with that requirement for our nuclear force structure? Please explain your answer. (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. Yes, the 2022 NPR calls for modernization of all three legs of the triad, nuclear command and control, and recapitalization of our nuclear weapons production complex to ensure its resilience and responsiveness.

I agree that our nuclear forces and posture should be resilient to geopolitical, operational, programmatic, and operational risks. The three legs of the nuclear triad are complementary and offer unique attributes that are mutually supporting and contribute to risk mitigation. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that we are identifying opportunities and taking steps to manage risks to our nuclear deterrent.

The 2010, 2018, and 2022 NPRs concluded that the United States would maintain a substantial portion of its nuclear forces on continuous alert, including keeping nearly all ICBMs on alert, and maintaining a significant number of SSBNs at sea at any given time.

Question. Do you agree with that conclusion? Please explain your answer. (Review: SPACE)

Answer. I agree that maintaining a portion of U.S. nuclear forces on day-to-day alert maximizes decision time, preserves the range of U.S. response options, and contributes to strategic stability. It enhances deterrence by denying potential adversaries the capability to destroy our nuclear deterrent forces in a surprise first strike.

In response to conditions set forth in the Senate Resolution of Ratification of the New START Treaty, President Obama certified on February 2, 2011, that he intended to “(a) modernize or replace the triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems: a heavy bomber and air-launched cruise missile, an ICBM, and a nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) and SLBM; and (b) maintain the United States rocket motor industrial base.”

Question. Do you agree with and support these objectives for modernizing the triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems? Please explain your answer. (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I agree and support the findings of the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review calling for full modernization of all three legs of the nuclear triad and reinvigoration of our nuclear weapons production complex and supporting industrial base. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that modernization of the nuclear triad and our nuclear weapons complex remains a top Department priority.

Question. In your view, is the current program of record sufficient to support full modernization of the nuclear triad, including delivery systems, warheads, while supporting National Nuclear Security Administration infrastructure? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I believe the forces in the Program of Record were designed with significant capacity to respond to a range of potential threats and challenges, ensuring the credibility of our deterrent into the future. I also agree with the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review’s finding that we must continue to carefully assess the security environment. If confirmed, I will support ongoing efforts within the Department of Defense, in partnership with the Department of Energy, to review these programs to ensure we are modernizing our forces and supporting infrastructure in an effective, affordable, sustainable, and timely manner.

Question. Do you support the program of record for replacing the Minuteman III ICBM system with the Sentinel ICBM system? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I support the finding of the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review that we must replace the Minuteman III ICBM with Sentinel to ensure the continued credibility of the ground leg of our nuclear triad.

The Long Range Stand Off Weapon (LRSO) is intended to replace the AGM-86B Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM).

Question. Do you support the Long Range Stand-Off weapon as a replacement for the aging ALCM? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I support the finding of the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review that we must replace the air-launched cruise missile with the Long Range Stand-off weapon to ensure the continued credibility of the air leg of our nuclear triad.

Question. If confirmed as USD(P), would you take steps to advocate for, and ensure the continued development of, the Sentinel ICBM and Long Range Stand-Off weapons programs? If so, what are those steps? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. Yes. I agree with Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks that modernization of our nuclear triad is a top DOD priority. If confirmed, I will advocate within the Department and with interagency partners, and engage with Congress for the effective and timely modernization of all three legs of the nuclear triad, including development of the Sentinel ICBM and the Long Range Stand-Off weapon, as well as nuclear command and control.

Question. The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review concluded that current security conditions did not warrant adoption of a nuclear “No First Use” (NFU) policy by the United States. Do you believe a NFU policy would be appropriate for the United States? Please explain your answer, including the implications of such a policy for the U.S. extended deterrence commitments to our Allies. (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I support the findings of the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review that adoption of a No First Use declaratory policy would result in an unacceptable level of risk given the range of non-nuclear capabilities being developed and fielded by competitors that could inflict strategic-level damage to the United States and its allies and partners. Some allies and partners are particularly vulnerable to attacks with non-nuclear means that could produce devastating efforts. I also support the NPR position that the United States retains the goal of moving toward a sole purpose dec-

laration and we will work with our Allies and partners to identify concrete steps that would allow us to do so.

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

Answer. As one of six principal members of the Nuclear Weapons Council, if confirmed I will work to ensure that the Department of Defense, in partnership with the Department of Energy, is working to realize the planned modernization of the nuclear triad and the National Nuclear Security Administration production complex while identifying opportunities to mitigate geopolitical, operational, programmatic, and technological risks.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to fully participating in Nuclear Weapons Council matters and personally attending meetings? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to fully supporting active and constructive Policy leadership as one of the six principal members of the Nuclear Weapons Council, including personally attending meetings as appropriate and as my other responsibilities permit.

Question. Do you support the continuation of the W93 program and parallel efforts to collaborate with the United Kingdom in the maintenance of its independent nuclear deterrent? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I agree with the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review's decision to continue the W93 warhead program and continue parallel efforts to collaborate with the United Kingdom on its Replacement Warhead program, the Common Missile Compartment, and the Mark 7 aeroshell.

Question. Based on your understanding of the condition of the Nation's nuclear command, control and communications system, do you believe the modernization of the system should be a high priority, and, if so, what actions would you take to advocate such steps, if confirmed? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. An effective Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) system that can provide command and control of U.S. nuclear forces at all times, and under all circumstances, is an essential element of deterrence and crisis stability. If confirmed, I would use the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy's chair in DOD governing and budget processes to advocate for prioritizing the modernization of the NC3 system, which underpins our nuclear deterrence capabilities.

During his confirmation hearing, Secretary Austin stated that any future reductions in U.S. nuclear forces should be taken only within the context of a formal, verifiable arms control agreements with adversaries, rather than by unilateral actions.

Question. Do you agree with Secretary Austin's views? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. Yes, I believe that reciprocal, verifiable nuclear arms control offers the most effective and responsible way to enable future reductions in nuclear forces. Unilateral steps are not an effective approach.

Question. In your assessment, how would delaying or canceling current nuclear modernization plans and programs affect our arms control negotiation leverage with near-peer and peer competitors? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I support the NPR-recommended modernization of U.S. nuclear forces and look forward to supporting this effort, if confirmed. Doing anything less would reduce U.S. leverage with our competitors.

Question. What is your current assessment of the New START Treaty and the likelihood of any follow-on nuclear arms control treaties with either Russia or China? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. When fully implemented by both parties, the New START Treaty can contribute to United States security. However, Russia's invalid suspension of the Treaty has eroded the effectiveness of the New START Treaty. Russian and Chinese actions to expand their respective nuclear arsenals make negotiating any future nuclear arms control treaties challenging.

Question. In your view, at what threshold condition should future nuclear arms control regimes be expanded to include China's arsenal, as well as those of the United States and Russia? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I believe China's nuclear buildup has already proceeded to a point where any future arms control regime that includes the United States must take into account both Russian and Chinese arsenals.

Question. Do you believe that the United States should consider accepting limitations on its missile defense, cyber, or conventional power projection capabilities as part of an agreement with Russia or China on nuclear weapons' reductions? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. No, I would not recommend accepting such asymmetrical limitations. On nuclear weapons reductions, I agree with the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)

observation that Russian and Chinese actions to expand their nuclear arsenals make mutual and verifiable arms control challenging. The United States will need willing partners operating in good faith to make any meaningful progress. On missile defense, I agree with the 2022 Missile Defense Review (MDR), which states that the Department supports strengthening mutual transparency and predictability with Russia and the China as appropriate. However, my understanding is that no missile defense limitations are currently under discussion. Compliance with negotiated cyber capability limitations would be unverifiable. The United States has instead sought to promote cyberspace stability through the recognition that existing international law applies to cyberspace, the promotion of cyberspace norms of responsible State behavior during peacetime, and confidence-building measures.

MISSILE DEFENSE

Question. Our current missile defense policy is focused on deterring North Korea and Iran while reserving our nuclear deterrent against missile threats from Russia and China.

What are your views on this policy, especially in light of Russia's recent statements and actions in Ukraine, as well as China's and North Korea's ongoing expansion of their respective nuclear and missile forces? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I support the 2022 Missile Defense Review (MDR), which continues longstanding policy stating that the United States will continue to rely on strategic deterrence—not missile defense—to address and deter large, intercontinental-range, nuclear-capable missile threats to the Homeland by near-peers. Against the DPRK and Iran, the MDR states that the United States will continue to stay ahead of threats to the Homeland through a comprehensive missile defeat approach, complemented by the credible threat of direct cost imposition through nuclear and non-nuclear means.

Question. What role do you believe integrated air and missile defenses should play in defending limited areas and defeating smaller scale cruise or hypersonic glide missile attacks by larger threats, such as Russia and China? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I agree with the 2022 Missile Defense Review (MDR), which recognizes that adversaries are pursuing and demonstrating advanced, long-range space and missile systems capable of traversing entire Combatant Command Areas of Responsibility, and that attacks from these systems could increasingly blur the line between regional and homeland defense and challenge existing integrated air and missile defense (IAMD) architectures. In this respect, I support examining all options to enhance our IAMD posture against conventional missile threats to the U.S. Homeland, including limited area defense against smaller scale missile threats. Regionally, I support the language of the MDR, which states that the United States will continue to pursue missile defenses in support of U.S. Forces, our Allies, and partners against all threats—including hypersonic missile threats—emanating from any source. Another key tenet of the MDR that I support is its emphasis on promoting international cooperation with Allies and partners to enhance collective IAMD efforts.

The global U.S. architecture for detecting and tracking threat missiles is a highly complex maritime, terrestrial, airborne, and space-based system of systems, with the constituent pieces managed and sustained by a number of different DOD components.

Question. Do you believe these various systems are appropriately integrated and provide operational commanders with a holistic threat picture capable of supporting real-time operational decisions? If so, please explain your answer. If not, please explain what steps you would take, if confirmed, to improve global sensor integration. (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I understand that U.S. missile warning and tracking systems are highly effective and that greater integration can make them even more effective. However, offensive missile threats are growing rapidly and our ability to keep pace is a perpetual challenge which will always have room for improvement. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments and Services, Defense Agencies, and operational commanders throughout the Department to ensure that U.S. systems can deliver critical, integrated and real-time information and data from ground and space-based sensors in support of U.S. missile defense systems around the world.

Question. If confirmed as USD(P), what would be your priorities for U.S. missile defense capabilities for the Homeland? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. If confirmed, my priorities for U.S. Homeland defense would include many of the areas of focus outlined in the 2022 Missile Defense Review (MDR). If confirmed my top priorities would include: improving ballistic missile defense of the Homeland, which covers all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories;

examining active and passive defense options for cruise missile defense of the Homeland; fielding active and passive defenses for the defense of Guam; and pursuing ground and space-based sensor integration of existing and future capabilities.

Question. What are your views about protection of the Homeland from cruise missile threats? (OCR: HDHA, OPR: SPACE)

Answer. In my view, we are seeing the emergence of a greater, more diverse, and more sophisticated missile threat to North America, including advanced, long range cruise and hypersonic missiles able to target critical infrastructure. The Department must be prepared to respond to this threat, both to defend the Homeland and to assure our ability to project military power globally. If confirmed, I will continue to examine both active and passive measures to decrease the risk from any cruise missile strike against critical assets, and work alongside our Canadian allies to improve NORAD's ability to detect potential threats in the approaches to North America.

Question. Do you support the current plan for modernizing the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GBMD) system, which anticipates the deployment of a Next Generation Interceptor in about a decade? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. Yes. As the backbone of the U.S. Homeland ballistic missile defense architecture, the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system offers a visible measure of protection for the U.S. population and ensures that we will not be coerced by growing DPRK intercontinental ballistic missile threats. If confirmed, I will commit to improving the capability and reliability of the GMD system, including deployment of the Next Generation Interceptor to complement and potentially replace our current Ground-Based Interceptors, as part of our comprehensive missile defeat strategy to stay ahead of DPRK and potentially Iranian missile threats.

Question. What is your assessment of the importance of a space-based sensor capability to support both regional and homeland missile defense scenarios? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I understand that space systems represent a critical layer of our integrated sensor network, providing global warning and communications for our Homeland and regional missile defense systems positioned around the world. Proliferated space-based sensor capabilities are resilient and enable persistent attribution, identification, tracking, and if needed, fire control-quality data against ballistic and hypersonic missile threats. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department has adequate spaced-based capabilities to support its regional and homeland missile defense networks.

Question. The most recent Unified Command Plan transferred the Joint Staff role of missile defense responsibility from Strategic Command to Space Command. Please explain your views on this change of oversight. (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I support the 2022 Unified Command Plan (UCP) decision to transfer missile defense responsibilities from U.S. Strategic Command to the U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM). Bringing different mission areas of missile warning, missile defense and space domain awareness under one command will enable USSPACECOM to integrate and fuse all the sensor data required—detection, characterization, tracking and dissemination—for effective missile defense.

Question. What component of the OUSD(P) is responsible for Theater Integrated Air and Missile Defense in Europe and the Indo-Pacific, and in your view, what should be done to improve the protection of deployed United States and allied forces from growing missile threats in operational theaters, particularly from advanced cruise and hypersonic missiles? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I understand that within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy there is a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Space and Missile Defense that works closely with the respective regional DASD responsible for Europe and the Indo-Pacific on Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD). I also understand that United States European Command (USEUCOM) and United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) are responsible for coordinating IAMD in the European and the Indo-Pacific theaters, respectively. In Europe, given the unprovoked and illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, IAMD plays an especially critical role. If confirmed, I will ensure we continue to work closely with our NATO and our European allies to ensure we have the right capacity and capabilities needed to address all types of missile threats and ensure our freedom of movement in theater. In the Indo-Pacific region, missile threats posed by China and others are growing and becoming more dangerous. If confirmed, I will actively work within the Department, as well as with allies and partners to enhance our regional IAMD efforts against any types of offensive missiles.

Question. What is your assessment of the recent activities associated with the missile defense of Guam? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. The defense of Guam is critical to United States presence in the Indo-Pacific region. I fully concur with the language from the 2022 Missile Defense Re-

view (MDR), which acknowledges that the missile defense architecture on Guam must be commensurate with its unique status as both part of the Homeland as well as a critical, regionally based operational hub. If confirmed, I will support efforts to ensure that our missile defenses on Guam strengthen deterrence while visibly demonstrating to our Allies and partners that the United States stands ready to fulfill its global security commitments.

SPACE

Question. China and Russia are training and equipping their military space forces and fielding new anti-satellite weapons to hold United States and allied space operations and activities at risk, even as they push for international agreements on the non-weaponization of space.

In your view, does the 2022 NDS accurately assess the strategic environment as it pertains to the domain of space? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. Absolutely. The 2022 NDS captures how China and Russia are integrating space into their military strategies and doctrine as a way of gaining information advantage. China in particular is integrating space and counterspace capabilities to enhance its ability to fight and win a modern military conflict. Specifically, China is leveraging increasingly sophisticated and proliferated space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) and command and control to improve the precision and accuracy of long-range missile systems, to seek to limit the Joint Forces' ability to operate in the Western Pacific.

Question. How would you assess current DOD readiness to implement the 2022 NDS as it relates to the domain of space and the 2022 Defense Space Strategy? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. In my understanding, the Department is fielding resilient systems in an assured space posture to preserve Joint Force access to the space-based services that underwrite combat credibility. I also understand that the Department is posturing across all domains to protect and defend the Joint Force from potential adversary threats emanating from hostile uses of space, including potential adversaries' ability to integrate space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems with command and control of means to track and strike our forces.

Question. What do you perceive as the most significant threats to United States national security space satellites? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I believe that the accelerating scope and scale of counterspace capabilities, particularly from China and Russia, is the most significant threat to United States national security space satellites, as well as to allied and partner space systems. China and Russia see counterspace capabilities as a way to gain the information advantage that is critical in modern warfare and to undercut the advantages that the United States Joint Force derives from space. Iran and North Korea have similarly pursued and demonstrated some counterspace capabilities.

Question. The DOD is increasingly reliant on commercial space systems which can become enemy combatants in a time of conflict.

What do you perceive as the most significant threats to commercial space systems owned by United States companies? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. Our adversaries have indicated that they do not discriminate between U.S. Government satellites and commercially owned satellites that support us. That means Chinese and Russian counterspace capabilities pose significant risk to these systems.

Question. What are the Department's responsibilities in defense of U.S. commercial assets in space, especially those the DOD is employing in a time of conflict? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. DOD's responsibilities to protect and defend commercial capabilities would be a function of the particular circumstances. My understanding is that the Department can utilize a range of solutions across all domains and during all phases of the spectrum of conflict to deter attacks against U.S. national security and space interests and, when necessary, defeat threats to those systems, including commercial space capabilities as directed.

Question. Do you believe the Department should offer indemnity to commercial companies supporting DOD operations? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. The Department relies on commercial services in sectors across the economy. I believe the Department must understand the risks it assumes under varying circumstances, just as commercial firms must understand the risks that they assume under varying circumstances across sectors. If confirmed, I will work with the Space Force and other stakeholders to identify the appropriate risk management options regarding commercial space companies supporting DOD space operations.

Question. Do you have concerns about over-reliance on commercial systems supporting DOD operations, especially in a time of conflict who may find it in the companies best commercial interest to cease support to the Department? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I believe that reliance on a mix of government and commercial solutions can diversify

risk. The correct balance and the degree of appropriate diversification would correspond to the criticality of the mission and other factors.

Question. If confirmed, would you support the development of offensive and defensive space control capabilities to counter threats against such assets? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. If confirmed, I would support the development of offensive and defensive space control capabilities to counter threats to U.S. national security interests in space and to counter adversaries that may pose a threat to the men and women of the Joint Force in the case of a conflict. I would support the development of options across all domains, including space, to defend our critical space systems and challenge an adversary's ability to track and strike our forces.

Question. What are your views on the U.S. Space Force? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I believe the creation of the U.S. Space Force was an overdue step to strengthen U.S. national security. Space is essential to the modern way of life and the modern way of war. Space also connects the Joint Force, and is a central component of integrated deterrence. It is critical that we have a cadre of Guardians focused on the unique challenges of the space domain to assure our space-based missions, attribute hostile acts, and protect the Joint Force from space-enabled attacks.

Question. What are your views on U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM)? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I believe the creation of the U.S. Space Command was an important step to strengthen U.S. national security. Space is a vital interest to the United States. From commerce to warfighting, our Nation depends on space. It is widely recognized as an operational domain, and there are risks of conflict just as there are in any other domain. It is important that we have a joint commander with operational authorities, focused on delivering effects from space, and protecting and defending our interests in space.

Question. In your view, how could the U.S. Space Force and SPACECOM exploit commercial and small launch options to allow for more rapid replenishment and on-orbit employment of vital warfighting systems, while minimizing risk of mission failure? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I understand the U.S. Space Force and U.S. Space Command are prioritizing initiatives that harness the innovative capacity of the U.S. commercial space industry. Today, one hundred percent of our payloads rely on commercial launch service providers. I understand that the Department continues to leverage its large demand for launch services to incentivize even more responsive options. If confirmed, I would support such efforts.

Question. Do you believe other services should maintain organic space capability? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I understand that with the establishment of the U.S. Space Force as a separate and distinct Service, many of the DOD space capabilities were transferred to the Space Force. That does not mean the other military departments don't have a need for their own organic space capabilities outside of what the U.S. Space Force can provide. If confirmed, I would monitor the space enterprise portfolio across the DOD and determine if additional realignments are necessary.

Question. Do you believe the Department of the Air Force is adequately funded to handle both the Space Force and the Air Force or should there be a TOA increase? If so, where should the increase come from and how should "pass through" be handled? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. As part of strengthening U.S. military advantages, it is critical to fund key space capabilities so that we address growing threats, especially those that have the ability to deny hostile uses of space by competitors and potential adversaries whose forces are increasingly enabled from space. Though I am not currently privy to budget details, if confirmed, I would ensure OSD Policy exercises its role in support of overseeing the budget process and the development of Secretary-level guidance that helps ensure the Military Departments' appropriate resourcing levels for capability development in space and other domains.

Question. Space systems, like other military systems, rely on the availability of sufficient frequency spectrum that is becoming scarce. If confirmed, how would you work with the Military Departments and Services, the Joint Staff, and other components of DOD to ensure that the Department's frequency spectrum requirements are accounted for and protected in interagency discussions about potential spectrum auctions? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. The modern electromagnetic environment is increasingly congested, contested, and constrained. I am aware that the Joint Force has critical reliance on the key portions of the spectrum that have been allocated for military use. If confirmed, I would work alongside DOD's Chief Information Officer to ensure DOD's access to critical spectrum, including by strengthening our commercial, interagency, and international partnerships to promote interoperability and spectrum access policies that support the U.S. military in conducting its full range of global operations.

Question. The fiscal year 2020 NDAA created a new Military Service dedicated to the space domain, as well as an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy to serve as the senior civilian official in the Office of the Secretary of Defense charged with oversight of military and interagency space policy and operations.

Question. Do you support this current arrangement? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. Yes. Across the U.S. Government, we now have broad recognition that space is at the heart of integrating our strategic as well as our conventional capabilities. I believe the creation of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy, U.S. Space Force, and U.S. Space Command were important steps to strengthen U.S. national security.

ELECTRONIC WARFARE

Question. Recent attention has been given Department-wide to the importance of electronic warfare, given its use in Ukraine and the importance which China and Russia has placed on it as a tactical warfighting element.

What are your views on this matter? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I understand that the Department relies on electronic warfare and the spectrum to conduct joint all domain operations. Our adversaries know this and are actively seeking to deny our ability to maintain freedom of access and maneuver in the electromagnetic spectrum. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department's efforts to ensure the Joint Force is prepared to fight through a contested and congested electromagnetic spectrum environment, preserving our use of the spectrum while denying its use to our adversaries.

CYBER POLICY AND AUTHORITIES

Question. What do you see as the primary cyber policy challenges for the Department currently, and what suggestion do you have for addressing them? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. If confirmed, what would your relationship be with:

- *The Commander of U.S. Cyber Command*
The Commander of USCYBERCOM is responsible for the planning of cyberspace missions; serving as the cyberspace operations joint force provider; and joint force trainer. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Commander of U.S. Cyber Command on all policy issues affecting USCYBERCOM's ability to achieve national security objectives.
- *The DOD Chief Information Officer*
The DOD CIO is the principal staff assistant and senior advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense for information technology (IT). If confirmed, I intend to foster a close relationship with the DOD CIO to strengthen governance of cybersecurity, communications, and information systems.
- *The Military Service Principal Cyber Advisors*
The role of the Military Service Principal Cyber Advisors (PCA) is important as they work to address cyber matters to include readiness, capabilities, budget, and strategy for their respective Services. If confirmed, I will work closely to engage with the Service PCAs on developing and implementing policies and strategies to synchronize these efforts across the Department.
- *The Director of Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) at DHS*
The Department's relationship with the Department of Homeland Security is imperative to ensuring the cybersecurity of U.S. critical infrastructure systems. If confirmed, I will prioritize having a positive relationship with the director of CISA that encourages expanded coordination and communication between our two Departments. I will also ensure DOD is postured to support requests for assistance from the Department of Homeland Security and other Federal civilian agencies.
- *The Director for the Defense Cyber Crime Center (DC3)*
The Defense Cyber Crime Center (DC3) is a Federal Cyber Center and the USDP serves as the lead official for Sector Risk Management Agency of the Defense Industrial Base. In these roles, both share responsibility for protecting

critical infrastructure. If confirmed, I will ensure that we are fully aligned and doing everything that we can to protect the Defense Industrial Base from malicious cyber activity.

Given the difficulty in anticipating and defending against cyber attacks, many suggest that the Department of Defense can only rely on a policy of cyber deterrence to protect its and the Nation's critical systems.

Question. Do you believe that deterrence is possible in cyberspace? In your view, is the current level and tempo of cyber attacks on the Department and on the Nation tolerable? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. There is no pure cyber deterrence, but it is a key aspect of integrated deterrence which involves DOD integrating across domains, theaters of operation, and the spectrum of conflict. Cyber is most effective when used in concert with other instruments of national power. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Department's current cyber posture and our assessment of cyber threats to the U.S.

Question. Do you believe that the Department's current capabilities and policies allow for the maintenance of robust cyber deterrence? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. Strong cyber capabilities make integrated deterrence more potent. It is imperative that all the foundational requirements from actionable intelligence to expeditious acquisition are in place to deliver the cyber effects with the best mission impact. The 2023 DOD Cyber Strategy lays out the Department's approach achieving national objectives in this domain, if confirmed. I look forward to guiding the implementation of this strategy.

Question. How can the Department improve its cyber deterrence posture? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. The 2023 DOD Cyber Strategy highlights the key pillars needed to ensure the Department can achieve the Nation's objectives in cyberspace, defending the Homeland being one of those pillars. It is imperative to work with the inter-agency, industry, and Allies and partners to share threat information to improve the collective posture in defense of our critical infrastructure and networks.

Question. Do you believe that the Department possesses the necessary authorities to stand up an effective cyber deterrence posture? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I understand the Department campaigns in and through cyberspace in support of the objectives established in the National Defense Strategy and as part of integrated deterrence. I believe that the Department possesses the necessary authorities to develop offensive and defensive cyber options to support the Joint Force and defend the Nation.

The fiscal year 2023 NDAA required the establishment of an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy. The committee understands that the position is being studied by an FFRDC to make recommendations as to the structure and functions of that office, and presumably it will subsume the functions of the DOD Principal Cyber Advisor.

Question. What are your views on the establishment of this position? (Review: SPACE)

Answer. I am aware of this statutory requirement and if confirmed, will work with this Committee to ensure I am implementing this provision in a manner consistent with our understanding of congressional intent. I believe civilian oversight of DOD's cyber authorities are critical. Additionally, I am committed to working with the selected individual to ensure that the Department has the policies, capabilities, and forces it needs to protect our Nation's interests and deter conflict.

Question. If confirmed, what how do you plan to work with the DOD Principal Cyber Advisor and the Military Service Principal Cyber Advisors in the coordination of cyber policy and the many cyber initiatives across the DOD? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. The Principal Cyber Advisor (PCA) plays an important role in providing independent advice to the Secretary of Defense on cyber policy, programs, plans, and budgeting as well as in managing the implementation of the DOD Cyber Strategy. If confirmed, I intend to work closely to engage with the PCAs on developing and implementing policies and strategies to synchronize these efforts across the Department.

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

What is your understanding of how DOD has been supporting the National Cyber Director? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. The NCD serves as a principal advisor to the President on cybersecurity policy and strategy, and cybersecurity engagement with industry and international stakeholders. DOD has a role in that process, as it oversees the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) Cybersecurity information sharing and Cybersecurity Maturity Model

Certification programs and also partners with DHS/CISA on the new Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative which partners directly with private sector. I also understand that DOD supported NCD on the development and implementation of the National Cybersecurity Strategy (NCS) ensured the DOD Cyber Strategy was complementary to the NCS.

Question. Do you have suggestions for how you might improve the relationship with the NCD if confirmed? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure that the close partnership between DOD and NCD continues, especially on matters of mutual interest in cybersecurity and in our relationships with the private sector. I look forward to learning more about the ongoing collaboration between the organizations.

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

If confirmed, what would you do to improve these cyber operations notifications? (Review: SPACE)

Answer. Transparency with Congress will be one of my top priorities, and, if confirmed, I will commit to looking into this concern and ensuring the Department provides adequate levels of information in support of congressional oversight.

Question. Are there steps other than improving the written notifications that you would take, if confirmed, to help Congress perform oversight of these critical operations? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. In addition to the written notifications, I understand the Department has a requirement to update congressional defense committees on military activities and operations in cyberspace. If confirmed, I will continue to support regular engagement with Congress.

Question. What is your understanding of the process for how the Department might respond to a request for Defense Support to Civilian Authorities (DSCA) when it comes to cyber incident? (OPR: HDHA, OCR: SPACE)

Answer. It is my understanding that the Department has a standard process for responding to any request for DSCA, whether the request is based on a natural disaster, a cyber incident, or a national security special event. Consistent with the law and DOD's policies, a Federal department or agency would request DOD assistance and DOD would review the request to consider legal, risk, cost, impacts on readiness, and other factors. If DOD approves the request, DOD would then source the appropriate forces or resources to provide the DSCA.

COOPERATIVE THREAT REDUCTION (CTR) PROGRAM

Question. The CTR Program is widening its aperture to include biological weapons and capabilities as well as biological surveillance and early warning, and encouraging the development of capabilities to reduce proliferation threats.

Do you support these DOD activities under the CTR program generally? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. Yes, I strongly support the DOD CTR program conducting these activities. The Biodefense Posture Review states that biological threats, whether from natural, accidental, or deliberate sources, present significant challenges for U.S. national security, while advancements in biotechnology and delivery system technologies have decreased barriers for WMD development. The CTR program is uniquely positioned to work with partner countries to eliminate biological weapons and weapons-related materials, secure dual-use biological materials, and build bio-surveillance capacity.

Question. Do you believe the shift in focus to biological programs is an effective use of CTR resources? Why or why not? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. Yes, my understanding is that the CTR program has worked to reduce biological threats for several years, including by making contributions to managing the 2014 West Africa Ebola crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Many partner countries relied on capacities built by the CTR program for their domestic response to COVID-19, highlighting the effectiveness of biodefense investments. If confirmed, I will work to prioritize the CTR program's activities according to the evolving security environment to make effective use of resources.

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Question. Drawing on DOD efforts during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014-2015 and the recent COVID-19 outbreak around the world, what attributes do you believe the Department of Defense can bring to bear to fight a global pandemic here and abroad? Please be specific. (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. DOD is ready to support the whole-of-government response to a global pandemic. Per the Biodefense Posture Review, DOD is developing pathogen-agnostic capabilities to support the response to regional or international bioincidents. In addition, DOD is working with allies and partners to help them develop similar capabilities, aiding in their direct ability to prevent pandemics or mitigate the effects of bioincidents. For instance, the Cooperative Threat Reduction program works with partners to build capacity to safely and securely detect and diagnose diseases caused by high-threat pathogens and to improve accurate and timely reporting of such diseases. DOD also plays an important role in supporting other U.S. departments and agencies in their primary responsibilities for responding to pandemics, for example the Department of Health and Human Services. Those other departments must be adequately resourced so that DOD can prioritize biodefense efforts that advance 2022 National Defense Strategy objectives.

Question. In May 2020, DOD partnered with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on Operation Warp Speed, which developed and delivered two safe and effective COVID vaccines by December 2020.

How would you assess the effectiveness of Operation Warp Speed as a pandemic response model? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. “Operation Warp Speed,” I understand, was established in May 2020. The Food and Drug Administration approved the first COVID-19 vaccines in August 2021 and not long thereafter made them readily available in the United States and to other nations. Given that a typical vaccine can take 5–10 years to develop and approve, my impression is that “Warp Speed” was effective.

Question. Do you believe that this DOD-HHS partnership should be restored to expedite the development of pancoronavirus vaccines, as well as countermeasures for other pandemic-potential pathogens? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. In general, DOD supporting other Federal departments and agencies in such partnerships, when necessary and appropriate, can be very effective. However, if confirmed, I would want to examine any existing mechanisms to determine if there are any opportunities to improve on them or if there are any mitigating considerations before launching any new partnerships.

U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND (INDOPACOM)

China

Question. The 2022 NDS describes the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as “the most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security” and states “The PRC seeks to undermine U.S. alliances and security partnership in the Indo-Pacific region, and leverage its growing capabilities, including its economic influence and the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) growing strength and military footprint, to coerce its neighbors and threaten their interest.”

Is the current posture of United States Forces in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support the NDS? Please explain your answer. (Review: SPC)

Answer. DOD clearly has made strides in modernizing its Indo-Pacific posture in support of the NDS. This includes expanding the scale and scope of U.S. military operations, exercises, and activities—many with our Allies and partners—to reinforce security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and strengthen deterrence. Through expanded Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement sites in the Philippines, a new Marine Littoral Regiment in Japan, and a range of force posture enhancements with Australia, among other initiatives throughout Southeast Asia and the broader region, the Department is reinforcing a resilient security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region to maintain regional stability and deter conflict. These capabilities will help us to strengthen integrated deterrence today and build the force we need for the future.

Question. In your assessment, what are the priority investments DOD could make that would implement the NDS and improve the military balance in the Indo-Pacific? (OPR: SPC, OCR: IPSA)

Answer. If confirmed, I would value consultations across Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and USINDOPACOM to assess priority initiatives for resourcing and advancement in the region. As Policy plays a critical role in the Department’s PPBE process, I will work with my counterparts to ensure that the Department’s budget submissions are aligned to strategy and make investments that advance our priorities in the Indo-Pacific. This should include capabilities, concept development, exercising, force rotations, infrastructure, and other key areas for investment that strengthen integrated deterrence.

Question. In your view, what are the key areas in which each Military Service must improve in order to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to prevail in a potential conflict with China? (OPR: SPC, OCR: IPSA)

Answer. As the PRC races to modernize its military, I believe the Department will continue to require the resources to implement the 2022 National Defense Strategy and keep our Nation safe while delivering a combat credible Joint Force that is the most lethal, resilient, agile, and responsive in the world.

If confirmed, I will work with Military Departments to ensure that the Department's budget submissions links strategy to resources and continue to execute the National Defense Strategy. As Policy plays a critical role in the Department's PPBE process, I will work with my counterparts to ensure that the Department's budget submissions make investments that advance our priorities in the Indo-Pacific region.

In my view, to sustain our military advantage over China, the Department will need to continue making investments in integrated air and missile defense, air and maritime dominance, and in munitions, including hypersonics. The Department will also need to invest in advanced capabilities, new operational concepts, and more resilient force posture in the Indo-Pacific region. Finally, investments in resiliency are needed to ensure stability in the industrial base's ability to produce what the Joint Force needs.

Question. Should the United States revisit or change its "one China" policy, in your view? (Review: IPSA)

Answer. Our One China policy has preserved peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait for more than four decades. The United States defense relationship with Taiwan is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), the Three Communiques, and the Six Assurances—and backed by strong, bipartisan support that has formed the bedrock of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. As the TRA makes clear: it is our longstanding policy to maintain the capacity to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security or the social and economic system of the people of Taiwan. If confirmed, I will seek to fulfill our obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act.

Question. In your view, how should United States joint concepts of operations, force posture, and investments adapt to address China's military modernization? (Review: SPC with IPSA)

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to ensure the Department is developing the right concepts, capabilities and investments to address the PRC as DOD's pacing challenge. Over the past year, the Department has delivered major achievements with Allies and partners to make United States Force posture across the Indo-Pacific region more mobile, distributed, resilient, and lethal.

In Japan, Australia, Guam, and the Compact States, it is essential that the United States maintains its approach of forward-stationing and deploying modernized and more capable forces, alongside major infrastructure investments in airfields, logistics, domain awareness, and resilience.

Across Southeast Asia, I understand that DOD is engaged in rotational deployments, exercises, logistics cooperation, and targeted security assistance to strengthen our partnerships, deepen interoperability, and enhance collective readiness. I would seek to continue this progress if confirmed.

Through campaigning, DOD demonstrates new capabilities with allies and partners, while developing the concepts and experimentation required to be successful in a high-intensity warfighting scenarios.

Question. What should the United States do, both unilaterally, and in coordination with allies and partners, to counter the increasing challenge posed by China in the South China and East China Seas? (Review: IPSA)

Answer. The United States seeks a free and open Indo-Pacific region in which all nations are secure in their sovereignty and free from coercion. It is the PRC that has conducted increasingly provocative actions and dangerous operational behaviors across the Indo-Pacific region, including in the South China Sea. DOD will continue to expand the scale and scope of activities to reinforce security and stability with our regional allies and partners in support of our common vision.

Question. What is your current assessment of the risk of a critical logistics failure in any conflict with China? (OPR: IPSA)

Answer. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further in a classified setting. Conflict in the Indo-Pacific region is neither imminent nor inevitable, because deterrence today remains real and strong. My view is that the Department of Defense is doing more than ever to maintain and strengthen deterrence across the region, and the significant investments proposed in President Biden's fiscal year 2024 budget underscore that commitment—particularly the budget's proposed 40 percent increase in funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI).

Question. What is your assessment of China's increasing military presence overseas, including its base in Djibouti and other infrastructure projects across the Indian Ocean? (OPR: IPSA, OCR: SPC)

Answer. I remain particularly concerned with the PRC's attempts to gain permanent military access in Africa, as well as the Indian Ocean region. A global PLA military logistic network has implications for our United States Allies and partners. All governments should closely examine any agreements or arrangements with China to ensure the PRC will not be allowed to undermine sovereignty and regional stability. If confirmed, I will continue the Department's efforts to strengthen alliances and partnerships rooted in a shared respect for transparency, accountability, sovereignty, and the rule of law.

Question. What non-military activities and resources do you believe are necessary to effectively address the challenge posed by China? Do you believe these current activities are sufficient? (OPR: IPSA)

Answer. I support the Biden-Harris Administration's approach, which draws upon a whole-of-government strategy to bring together diplomatic, military, and economic tools to maintain stability, strengthen deterrence, and protect the national security interests of the American people. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department's active role as part of this approach, because, as Secretary Austin said in May, "[t]o compete and succeed, we must use all the tools of American power."

Question. The ability of U.S. ground forces to hold at risk adversary ships and aircraft; intercept missiles aimed at our ships, airfields, ports and other fixed facilities; and provide electronic warfare and communications support for our air and naval forces could enable the United States to present adversaries with our own "anti-access/area denial" (A2/AD) challenge.

What should be the role of ground forces in creating an A2/AD challenge for adversaries within the First Island Chain in the Indo-Pacific? What specifically should be the role of the Army? (OPR: SPC, OCR: IPSA)

Answer. Rotational and forward-stationed ground forces are a key aspect of integrated deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region. Land-based long and medium range precision fires enhance the joint force's combat credibility because the PLA can preclude some of our more traditional platforms from operating inside the first island chain. We thus need additional options to present our own A2/AD challenge, and dispersed and resilient land-based fires are a key part of this. U.S. Army and Marine ground forces also play an essential role in training, assisting, and reassuring allies and partners across the conflict continuum. Last, the United States Army supports the joint force through theater logistics and command and control, both of which the PLA will persistently contest in a conflict.

Question. Do you believe the current ground force posture in INDOPACOM is adequate? If not, what would you recommend to bolster it? (OPR: SPC, OCR: IPSA)

Answer. I commend the Department for its progress in enhancing our ground force posture in the Indo-Pacific region. Our ground force posture in the Indo-Pacific region is key to providing long range fires capability and logistics support to the Joint Force. On a day-to-day basis, ground forces play an important role in campaigning to preserve regional stability by strengthening deterrence and enhancing partnerships, including by conducting comprehensive exercises with allies and partners. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to refine exercises in the region to ensure operational relevance for the United States and our allies and partners and assess resourcing requirements as the Department enhances its Indo-Pacific posture.

Question. Do you support the Defense Posture Realignment Initiative (DPRI), including the realignment of some United States Marines from Okinawa to Guam and the buildup of facilities at other locations? (OPR: SPC, OCR: IPSA)

Answer. I support the continued implementation of the realignment plan known as the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI), which is the bilaterally determined way forward. The realignment of Marine Corps forces on Okinawa and the main islands of Japan, including the establishment of a strong presence on the United States territory of Guam, is fundamental to the Department's effort to achieve an improved Indo-Pacific defense posture, contributing to a free and open Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I will remain regularly engaged with United States Indo-Pacific Command, the Military Departments and Services, and the Department of State to proactively adapt United States access and joint presence to the realities of strategic competition, and to ensure our posture is optimized for deterrence of adversary aggression, ally and partner assurance, and warfighting, if necessary.

Question. The number of nuclear weapons currently possessed by China relative to the United States and Russia is often cited as an impediment to comprehensive nuclear arms control talks.

What are the strategic implications of the rapid modernization of Chinese nuclear weapons that are set to at least double by 2030, and what approach should the United States take to address those implications, in your view? (OPR: SPACE, OCR: IPSA)

Answer. The PRC's nuclear force expansion and diversification increases the PRC's capabilities to threaten the United States and our allies and partners. A large and diverse nuclear arsenal could also provide the PRC with new options to leverage nuclear weapons for coercive purposes, including in the form of military provocations against our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. For the first time, the United States will face two major nuclear powers as strategic competitors and potential adversaries, which will create new challenges for strategic stability, deterrence, assurance, arms control, and risk reduction. If confirmed, I will support efforts to assess the implications of the PRC's nuclear force expansion and diversification and will consider whether nuclear force and other adjustments are necessary.

Question. What do you think could motivate China to participate in nuclear arms control negotiations in a genuine and meaningful way? (OPR: SPACE, OCR: IPSA)

Answer. I agree with the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review's (NPR) observation that the scope and pace of the PRC's nuclear expansion, as well as its lack of transparency and growing military assertiveness, raise questions regarding its intentions, nuclear strategy and doctrine, and perceptions of strategic stability. I believe we must continue to convey a consistent message to the PRC that it will be more secure in a world where it engages in and complies with meaningful efforts to reduce strategic risks.

Question. In your view, with the rapid development in both quantity and quality of Chinese nuclear capabilities, does U.S. nuclear posture and nuclear doctrine need to change from its current construct based on a single near-peer nuclear strategic competitor to a new framework based on two near-peer nuclear strategic competitors? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I agree with the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review's finding that we must carefully assess the implications of China's ongoing nuclear expansion for United States nuclear strategy, forces, arms control approaches, and planning for regional conflict. If confirmed, I will support efforts to assess the implications of the PRC's nuclear force expansion and diversification and will consider whether nuclear posture and other adjustments are necessary.

Question. As Chinese aggression and nuclear capabilities both increase, do you assess that the United States has adequate military and national security crisis communication channels with senior Chinese leadership to avoid or at least mitigate the threat of rapid strategic escalation? (OPR: IPSA, OCR: SPACE)

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department's emphasis on the importance of open lines of military-to-military communication between the United States and the PRC to ensure that competition does not inadvertently veer into conflict. While the PLA has remained largely unwilling to engage in substantive dialog with the Department recently, my commitment to maintaining open lines of communication would continue if I am confirmed.

Taiwan

Question. How do you assess the current cross-strait relationship between China and Taiwan, and how can the United States help prevent miscalculation on either side? (Review: IPSA)

Answer. We have seen the PRC increasingly turn to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as an instrument for coercion in support of its global ambitions, including, but not limited to, conducting more dangerous actions in and around the Taiwan Strait.

Consistent with longstanding policy, the Administration is focused on preventing military conflict against Taiwan using a whole of government approach and does not support unilateral changes to the status quo across the Strait. If confirmed, I will support the Department's continued efforts to ensure that cross-Strait deterrence remains real and strong.

Question. How do you assess the current military balance across the Taiwan Strait? What do you believe should be the priorities for United States military assistance to Taiwan? Do you think Taiwan is making appropriate investments in its defensive capabilities and if not, what changes would you recommend? (Review: IPSA)

Answer. We have seen a growing number of states in the region and throughout the international community reiterate the importance of peace and stability in and around the Taiwan Strait.

Multiple Administrations and Congresses with leaders from both parties have sustained the Taiwan Relations Act with strong bipartisan support for providing Tai-

wan with self-defense capabilities and maintaining our own capacity to resist any use of force that jeopardizes the security of the people of Taiwan.

I know that the Administration is encouraged by Taiwan's commitment and welcomes Taiwan's continued investment in defense and resilience. If confirmed, I will support the Department's role in ensuring that the United States Government continues to fulfill its longstanding obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act.

Question. Some have argued that the United States should explicitly State that we would respond militarily to any Chinese use of force against Taiwan as a means to deter such actions. In your view, what would be the benefits and risks of such a policy change? (Review: IPSA)

Answer. Our longstanding policy has preserved peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait for more than four decades. Furthermore, the United States defense relationship with Taiwan is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), the Three Communiques, and the Six Assurances—and backed by strong, bipartisan support that has formed the bedrock of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. As the TRA makes clear: it is our longstanding policy to maintain the capacity to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security or the social and economic system of the people of Taiwan. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department's role in ensuring that the United States Government continues to fulfill its longstanding obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act.

Japan

Question. What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with Japan? (Review: IPSA)

Answer. The United States-Japan relationship is stronger than ever. In addition to Japan's historic participation in the Camp David Summit earlier this year, the United States and Japan made historic announcements over the past year to optimize Alliance posture; modernize our roles, missions, and capabilities; and expand multilateral partnerships.

Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Washington, DC. in January followed the release of consequential strategic documents which announced Japan's intention to increase defense spending to 2 percent of Japan's Gross Domestic Product over the next 5 years. If confirmed, I will seek to build on this Alliance and enhance our shared security interests.

Question. In late 2022, Japan signaled a significant change in its defense posture with the release of a new National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and the Defense Buildup Program.

In your view, how can the United States best support Japan's defense transformation in line with its strategic documents? (Review: IPSA)

Answer. I understand that Japan is seeking to substantially increase its defense budget and acquire new capabilities, like counterstrike, that will strengthen regional deterrence and bolster Japan's self defense missions. Bilateral exercises, strengthening our coordination mechanisms as an Alliance, and working collaboratively with Japan to address future challenges are key to our security relationship.

Question. Do you believe we should consider modifications to United States military organizational and command and control relationships to better align with the Permanent Joint Headquarters of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces? (OPR: IPSA)

Answer. The Department supports Japan's decision to establish a permanent Japan Self-Defense Forces joint headquarters. We do not have plans to change our combatant command structure or authorities at this time, but we will explore more effective command and control relationships to enhance interoperability and responsiveness.

Republic of Korea

Question. How would you describe the value to United States national security interests of the United States Republic of Korea alliance? (Review: IPSA)

Answer. The United States and the ROK are making historic progress in expanding multilateral defense cooperation with partners in the Indo-Pacific region. The partnership is essential to not just deterring and responding to the DPRK, but also furthering United States interests in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world. I know that the Department has worked to integrate United States and ROK maritime security cooperation programs with allies and partners in the region, expand participation in multilateral exercises, assist allies and partners with equipment diversification, and encourage defense industrial cooperation.

Question. Do you believe the transfer of wartime operational control from the United States to the Republic of Korea should be conditions-based? If so, and if con-

firmed, what conditions would you recommend that the Secretary of Defense delineate as the threshold for transfer of control? (OPR: IPSA)

Answer. The United States, and just as importantly, the ROK continue to believe that the transfer of wartime operational control should be conditions-based. We are making steady progress toward this goal, which will strengthen our combined defensive posture on the Korean Peninsula. That said, we cannot rush our efforts. As we continue to acquire the bilaterally approved levels of capabilities to achieve our stated goals and conditions, I would, if confirmed, recommend to the Secretary that a stable security environment remains the threshold for transfer of control.

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, including through trilateral cooperation between the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan? (Review: IPSA)

Answer. The Administration made historic progress during the most recent Camp David Summit. The United States and the ROK are enhancing trilateral cooperation with Japan to more effectively deter the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear and missile threats and to strengthen peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the Indo-Pacific region. DOD held trilateral meetings at various levels, most recently at the Shangri-La Dialogue with Secretary Austin and his counterparts and at the Defense Trilateral Talks at the Assistant Secretary-level last April to advance core trilateral security cooperation objectives.

Australia

Question. What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with Australia? (Review: IPSA)

Answer. I believe the United States-Australia relationship is stronger than it has ever been. I know that the Department is broadening Force Posture Initiatives to new domains, locations, deepening cooperation to secure our technological edge, and expanding opportunities to enable trilateral defense ties with other regional partners, including with Japan.

At the AUSMIN 2023 meeting this past summer, the United States and Australia announced key advances related to force posture including new operating locations, designating space cooperation as a Force Posture Initiative; pre-positioning of United States Army stores and materiel in Bandiana through the Combined Logistics, Sustainment and Maintenance Enterprise; and enhanced regional maritime domain awareness through rotations of United States Navy maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft in Australia. They also agreed to deepen cooperation on Australia's guided weapons and explosive ordnance enterprise by collaborating on a production capability in Australia with an initial focus on co-production of guided multiple launch rocket systems by 2025. Additionally, the trilateral AUKUS partnership is a generational opportunity to strengthen regional deterrence by strengthening our capabilities, as well as those of two of our closest Allies, Australia and the UK.

In 2021, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States announced the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) partnership with the objective of helping Australia to acquire a fleet of nuclear-propelled submarines and increasing collaboration on a range of advanced technology initiatives.

Question. What are your views of the AUKUS partnership? (Review: SPC)

Answer. AUKUS is a generational opportunity to strengthen regional deterrence while increasing our combined advanced capabilities and strengthening our partnerships. Congress is also a critical partner in implementing this effort. AUKUS will support Australia's acquisition of a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine, expand trilateral cooperation on advanced technologies, enhance global posture, and help ensure our defense industrial bases have closer integration.

Question. In your view, are there improvements, clarifications, or enhancements that need to be made to effectively implement the AUKUS partnership as intended? (Review: SPC)

Answer. AUKUS is a historic opportunity for our national security, and we know that making AUKUS work will require the Department and Congress to continue to work together closely. Part of this work involves reexamining our approach to information and technology sharing. We have reached a point in the global security environment and technology landscape where there is not only a benefit, but an imperative, to expand our defense technology-sharing practices. In pursuit of this objective, the Administration has requested Congress' oral support in enabling export licensing exemptions for AUKUS, streamlining defense trade with two of our most trusted allies, and raising our collective standards to protect the critical technologies that provide U.S. Forces with warfighting advantages. We appreciate the efforts of Congress to advance these efforts and to realize the full potential of the AUKUS partnership.

The Philippines

Question. What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with the Philippines? (Review: IPSA)

Answer. The United States-Philippine military-to-military relationship, underpinned by the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty, is stronger than ever. Our two countries announced in February that we would designate four new Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites, and President Marcos formally announced the locations in April ahead of his meeting with President Biden. In May, we also released our new Bilateral Defense Guidelines. The United States and the Philippines have committed to move quickly in advancing necessary plans and investments for the new EDCA sites, as well as United States support for the Philippines' military modernization.

Question. In your view, are there opportunities to improve our military-to-military cooperation with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, particularly as it relates to issues in the South China Sea? (OPR: IPSA)

Answer. The Philippines is a treaty Ally and we have a long history of mutual defense cooperation. If confirmed, I would continue to prioritize military-to-military cooperation with the Philippines on issues including maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance, defense institution building, and increasing the size and complexity of bilateral and multilateral exercises to advance our shared goal of upholding a free and open Indo-Pacific region, including in response to destabilizing PRC actions in the South China Sea.

India

Question. What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with India? (OPR: IPSA)

Answer. As President Biden has said, the United States-India relationship is the "defining relationship" of the 21st century, and our defense cooperation with India has emerged as a critical pillar for both countries. We are at a transformative moment in our defense cooperation with India, in part because of the great strides both countries have taken to enable our militaries to operate and coordinate more closely across the military services and in multiple warfighting domains. If confirmed, I would continue to bolster the Major Defense Partnership with India by expanding our technology cooperation to support India's military modernization and the areas of operational collaboration between our militaries.

Question. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or "Quad" between the United States, Japan, India, and Australia is designed to uphold the international rules-based order, ensure freedom of navigation, promote democratic values, improve information sharing, and enhance technological collaboration.

What are your views on the Quad and, in your view, how can it be more effectively utilized as a multilateral platform for addressing challenges in the Indo-Pacific region? (OPR: IPSA)

Answer. The Quad plays an increasingly central role in promoting peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific among like-minded partners. The Quad has been most effective when it has worked closely with its Indo-Pacific partners and guided by regional countries' priorities and by responding to regional countries' needs. Over the past several years, the Quad has emerged as an important forum for mobilizing a collective commitment by its members to address shared challenges, including those in the maritime domain.

UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND (EUCOM)

Russia

Question. What do you believe are the greatest challenges for United States-Russia security relations? How would you describe the central objectives of United States security strategy regarding Russia? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The greatest challenge for United States-Russia security relations is Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine. Until Russia ceases its brutal invasion, no meaningful progress on United States-Russia bilateral relations is possible.

If confirmed, I would work to ensure a sovereign, democratic Ukraine and to prevent the widening of the conflict outside of Ukraine, while also maintaining Allied unity in response to Russian aggression.

Question. How do EUCOM and NATO activities fit into a "whole of government" approach to deterring Russian aggression? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. As part of a whole-of-government approach, DOD's actions contribute to a range of interagency initiatives to compete with Russia, deter and, if necessary, defend against Russian aggression toward NATO. Through bilateral security assistance to Ukraine, military exercises, and deployments in theater, the United States

and its NATO Allies are able to collectively push back against Russia's war in Ukraine and deter further Russian aggression.

Question. What do you see as the role of forward-deployed United States Forces in Europe in deterring Russian aggression against our NATO allies and partners? (Review: ISA)

Answer. The United States, along with our NATO allies, have an important role to play to deter further Russian aggression. The forward-deployed forces the United States has in Europe show our resolve to defend our Allies, and have allowed us to swiftly reinforce NATO's flanks following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. United States Military exercises in theater also demonstrate the United States' combat credibility, which further enhances United States deterrence messaging.

Question. What is your view of Russia-China relations? (Review: ISA)

Answer. Russia-China cooperation is concerning on many levels. They collaborate in the economic, diplomatic, and military/security arenas in a so-called "no limits" partnership. Although they have differing national interests in the region and different motivations for their actions, they share an authoritarian view that undermines global security and the rules-based system from which we've all benefited. Though Russia and China are not truly "allied" through security guarantees, they are aligned in wanting to share a world consistent with their authoritarian model-gaining leverage over other nations' economic, diplomatic, and security decisions.

Question. In your assessment, does DOD currently have a mature joint concept of operations and the necessary capabilities in sufficient capacity to mitigate the challenge of Russian A2/AD capabilities? If not, what changes should be implemented? (OPR: SPC, OCR: ISA)

Answer. In my assessment, DOD has the necessary concepts, capabilities, and capacity to mitigate the challenge of Russian A2/AD capabilities. If confirmed, I would work across DOD and in close cooperation with the Intelligence Community to continue to assess changes in the Russian threat resulting from the war in Ukraine, and ensure DOD makes adjustments as necessary to maintain its warfighting advantage and achieve the Nation's strategic objectives.

Question. In your view, what are the key elements of an effective strategy to counter Russian hybrid warfare? (OPR: SPC, OCR: ISA)

Answer. Russian authorities have demonstrated a capacity and willingness to use irregular means of disinformation, deception, and covert operations to accomplish its foreign policy goals as part of Russia's broader competition. In accordance with the National Defense Strategy, I know that DOD is working alongside allies and partners to deter, defend, and build resilience against acute forms of "gray zone" coercion.

Traditional military tools may not always be the best options to counter competitors' coercive measures in the "gray zone." In some cases, intelligence sharing, economic measures, diplomatic initiatives, partner-enabled national resilience operations, and activities in the information domain may prove more effective or may be required alongside the more traditional military activities. I believe the Department should work with its partners in other United States Departments and Agencies to provide an integrated response to the challenges posed by Russia's irregular warfare.

ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS WITH RUSSIA

Question. In your view, what is the appropriate role of arms control in the United States security strategy regarding Russia? (Review: ISA)

Answer. The appropriate role of arms control in the United States' security strategy regarding Russia is to prevent the escalation of military conflicts, reduce the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, and maintain strategic stability between the two nations. Arms control agreements can foster transparency and predictability in the bilateral relationship, helping to avoid misperceptions and miscalculations.

Question. The Department of Defense and the Department of State must work collaboratively with our NATO Allies to develop approaches for arms control and confidence-and security-building measures in Europe. We must be cautious not to impose any constraints that would hinder NATO's ability to strengthen its deterrence and defense capabilities. It is imperative that we maintain a balance in our objectives.

What are your views on the military significance of Russian tactical nuclear forces not covered by the New START Treaty and whether arms control measures can adequately address them? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I support effective efforts to address the disparity between the non-strategic nuclear weapons stockpiles of the United States and Russia. Formal, verifiable

arms control could provide an effective means of addressing this disparity but we need a willing negotiating partner to make meaningful progress.

Question. Do you support mutually agreed reductions in tactical nuclear weapons? Do you believe such reductions can be equitably achieved given the significant quantitative disparity in the number of Russian and U.S. weapons? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. Yes, provided any such agreement addresses the current disparity, is verifiable, and makes the United States and its allies more secure.

Question. Do you believe bilateral reductions serve United States security interests considering the trajectory of China's nuclear force expansion? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. I believe any future U.S. reductions to its nuclear forces, bilateral or otherwise, must account for the PRC's nuclear expansion as well as Russia's entire nuclear arsenal.

Question. Do you believe that the United States should consider accepting limitations on its missile defense, cyber, or conventional power projection capabilities as part of an agreement with Russia or China on nuclear weapons reductions? (OPR: SPACE)

Answer. No, I would not recommend accepting such limitations. On nuclear weapons reductions, I agree with the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) observation that Russian and PRC actions to expand their nuclear arsenals make mutual and verifiable arms control challenging. The United States will need willing partners operating in good faith to make any meaningful progress. On missile defense, I agree with the 2022 Missile Defense Review (MDR), which states that the Department supports strengthening mutual transparency and predictability with Russia and the PRC as appropriate. However, my understanding is that no missile defense limitations are currently under discussion. Compliance with negotiated cyber capability limitations would be unverifiable. The United States has instead sought to promote cyberspace stability through the recognition that existing international law applies to cyberspace, the promotion of cyberspace norms of responsible State behavior during peacetime, and confidence-building measures.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

Question. In your assessment, does the NATO Alliance continue to benefit the national security interests of the United States? (Review: ISA)

Answer. Yes. NATO reflects our shared values with our transatlantic partners and is instrumental to the safety of our Nation.

Question. How important to U.S. strategic interests is the U.S. commitment to its obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The U.S. commitment to mutual defense under Article 5 of NATO's founding treaty is essential to our strategic interests. The commitment of all Allies to collective self-defense is the core of NATO's strength, which has ensured Euro-Atlantic security for almost 75 years.

Question. What do you view as the essential strategic objectives of the NATO Alliance in the coming years and what do you perceive are the greatest challenges? (Review: ISA)

Answer. I believe the most essential strategic objective of NATO is maintaining allied unity and ensuring collective self-defense. The greatest challenge the Alliance will continue to face is maintaining both Alliance unity and a ready force in light of the acute threat posed by Russia and their continued aggression.

Question. What is your assessment of the current levels of Allied contributions to burden sharing and should our Allies do more to meet their commitments on defense spending and procurement? (Review: ISA)

Answer. NATO Allies have increased defense spending for nine consecutive years. After this year, European Allies and Canada will have invested more than \$450 billion above previous levels in their defense since 2014. In addition, many allies and partners are providing an extraordinary amount of capability to Ukraine. Some Allies—such as Latvia and Estonia—have committed assistance equating to more than 1 percent of their GDP as compared to .18 percent for the United States—which ranks us 14th globally using this metric. Allies and partners can also provide unique capabilities that the United States might not have in inventory, including Leopard tanks, various infantry fighting vehicles, 152mm and 122mm ammunition, and certain types of multiple launch rocket systems. And factoring in humanitarian support, including taking in more than 8 million refugees, it is clear our European and Canadian allies and partners have indeed stepped up to support Ukraine. If confirmed, I look forward to leveraging Secretary Austin's Ukraine Defense Contact Group to drive support from around the world.

Question. If confirmed how will you encourage NATO Allies to maintain a positive trajectory on defense spending? (Review: ISA)

Answer. NATO Allies have increased defense spending for nine consecutive years. NATO's most recent defense spending estimates show a real increase of 8.3 percent in 2023, the largest yearly increase in decades. After 2023, European Allies and Canada will have invested more than \$450 billion above previous levels in their defense since the 2014 defense investment pledge. If confirmed, I will continue to press our allies to build on this momentum.

Question. NATO has taken a number of steps to adapt to the current security environment in Europe and globally, including issuing a new strategic concept, developing regional defense plans for the Atlantic and European Arctic; the Baltic region and central Europe; and the Mediterranean and Black Sea, and building a force with higher readiness to support these regional plans. (OPR: ISA)

Answer. I am encouraged by the steps we have taken in NATO to respond to the changed security environment and fully support the Supreme Allied Commander Europe in his work to enable the regional plans.

Question. If confirmed, what criteria would you use for defining and measuring the success of these NATO efforts in enhancing credible deterrence? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. NATO's new Strategic Concept is an important document that prepares the Alliance to act in a new security environment. The recently approved Family of Defense Plans and the NATO Force Model enhance NATO readiness and provide for a more credible Allied deterrence. If confirmed, I will work closely with our NATO Allies to ensure these efforts are robust and effective.

Question. What is your assessment of the role that the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) has played in increasing combat capability in Europe and enhancing deterrence of Russian aggression? What role would you foresee for EDI going forward? Please explain your answer. (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The foresight of the congressionally supported EDI-associated investments in Europe since 2015 along the five lines of effort of : 1) Increased Presence; 2) Exercises and Training; 3) Enhanced Prepositioning; 4) Improved Infrastructure; and 5) Building Partnership Capacity was borne out in the robust United States response to Russia's further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. These investments enabled DOD to reinforce NATO members' security more quickly and with more combat power than any other Ally, deterring Russian aggression against NATO.

I understand that since EDI transitioned from the former Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget to the base budget in fiscal year 2022, it no longer provides funding from a separate account. However, DOD has given guidance to the Military Departments on how to identify EDI-associated investments along the original five lines of effort in their base budgets going forward. This assists the Department in articulating tangible commitments of funding to the Russia deterrence mission.

Question. NATO's nuclear policy states, "The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capability is to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance. NATO's goal is a safer world for all; the Alliance seeks to create the security environment for a world without nuclear weapons." This point was most recently reaffirmed within the alliance's 2022 Strategic Concept, adopted at the Madrid Summit."

In your view, should NATO remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. Yes. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO should remain a nuclear alliance. The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capabilities is to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression.

Question. In your view, is there a continuing requirement for deploying U.S. nuclear weapons in NATO countries? (OPR: ISA, OCR: Space)

Answer. Yes. NATO's nuclear deterrence posture relies on United States nuclear weapons forward deployed in Europe, as well as United States strategic forces. The presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in NATO countries for the last 60 years has successfully deterred aggression against the Alliance, and this cooperation continues to provide an essential political and military link between Europe and North America. In my view, United States nuclear weapons should remain in NATO countries for as long as nuclear weapons remain a threat.

Question. Do you believe the existing United States nuclear force posture should be reexamined given Russia's ongoing efforts to redeploy tactical nuclear weapons into Belarus? (OPR: ISA, OCR: Space)

I am not aware of any reason to raise our alert levels or adjust the U.S. nuclear posture, and, based on what I know, I am comfortable with the United States' strategic defensive posture at the moment.

Ukraine

Question. What is your assessment of the current U.S.-Ukraine security relationship? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. I believe the United States-Ukraine security relationship has never been stronger. The United States has clearly demonstrated we stand with Ukraine, as the Ukrainian people fight for freedom, democracy, and independence. Throughout the war, the United States has worked closely with the Ukrainian government to ensure Ukraine's most urgent needs are met, including on the battlefield. In addition to enabling Ukraine to defend itself from Russia's brutal invasion, United States security assistance has shown Ukraine, Allies, partners, and adversaries that the United States is a reliable partner and force for political and economic stability globally.

Question. Do you support continued United States security assistance to Ukraine? Are there specific capabilities that in your view should be prioritized through the provision of U.S. security assistance? (Review: ISA)

Answer. I am strongly supportive of continued United States security assistance to Ukraine. The capabilities the United States is providing have enabled Ukraine to push back on Russia's brutal war. United States assistance is critical to enable Ukraine's continued fight for freedom, to sustain Ally and partner support, and to send a clear message to Russia and China that using force to seize territory is a losing strategy.

I expect long-range fires to continue being a high-priority requirement in the future, particularly as Ukraine's counteroffensive continues. This includes critical capabilities, such as GMLRS and 155mm artillery ammunition. As winter approaches, I also see air defense systems as particularly important to defend Ukrainian citizens and critical infrastructure from Russia's barbaric air campaigns. If confirmed, I will work closely with Ukrainian counterparts at multiple levels to understand their ongoing capability requirements.

Question. In your view, how does the provision of assistance to Ukraine contribute to a broader United States security strategy in Europe? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. United States security assistance to Ukraine directly supports United States strategic aims in Europe and across the globe. The United States is committed to, and benefits from, a peaceful, stable Europe. Russia's brutal war in Ukraine threatens this stability and undermines core United States values, including freedom, democracy, and independence. Supporting the Ukrainian people as they defend themselves and their country is not only morally right but it also highlights to Allies and partners the United States is a reliable partner. This support further demonstrates to adversaries around the globe that using force to seize territory will not lead to success.

Question. Senior Ukrainian leaders have requested assistance to enhance their deep-strike capabilities. What is your view on the provision of deeper strike capabilities like the United States Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) or the British Storm Shadow? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. There is no doubt that deep strike, or the capability to strike military targets beyond the forward line of troops, within territorial Ukraine, is an important capability for the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

However, it is important to remain realistic about the ability of any one capability to change the outcome of the war. Deep strike capabilities should be considered as part of the whole effort to modernize and equip Ukraine's air and ground forces.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you recommend DOD take in the near term to help Ukraine to ensure the counteroffensive is successful? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. First, it's my understanding that the Department is already using its existing channels with Ukraine to help aid their operations on the ground well. We are in constant and close communication with Ukrainian military and civilian leaders to understand their battlefield requirements. The Ukrainians know how to fight, but the Russians are learning as well, and going forward, it will be an iterative process to help ensure the Ukrainian military has all the faculties and capabilities it needs to defeat Russian aggression in their country. Concretely, I know we are working on solutions to bolster Ukraine's air defense and ensure a steady ammunition supply, which will undoubtedly improve their progress on the ground.

United States and NATO Force Posture in Southeastern Europe and the Black Sea

Question. In your view, is the security and stability of the Southeastern European region and the Black Sea in the United States national security interest? (Review: ISA)

Answer. Absolutely. This region is home to some of our closest Allies, and the more we improve the security situation in the Black Sea region, the more we can increase stability and economic prosperity. If confirmed, I'll ensure that the Department emphasizes security for the Black Sea region—in full support of the inter-

agency strategy submitted in June—and strengthen security to help our Allies and partners counter aggression from Russia and malign influence from the PRC. Furthermore, we also recognize that we can't do this alone and that we must approach security in the region in tandem with our partners. Since the region lies at the crossroads of competing challenges and threats, improving security in the Black Sea region is an important investment in long term global stability.

Question. NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) includes approximately 650 United States servicemembers. Do you believe the United States should maintain its commitment to KFOR?

Answer. Yes. The United States commitment to KFOR demonstrates our resolve to ensuring safety and stability in the Southeast Europe. Our deployment facilitates the mission's success. KFOR's presence also serves to deter malicious actors who would attempt to undermine sovereignty and stability in the Western Balkans. The United States relies in large part on Allied and partner contributions to KFOR, which total more than 3,700 military personnel—up to 86 percent of the total force.

Question. NATO has maintained an “enhanced” forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance, while deploying a more limited “tailored” forward presence in the southeastern region and the Black Sea.

Do you support efforts to boost NATO's forward presence in the southeast and Black Sea region? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. Yes, I support NATO's efforts to boost presence in southeast Europe and the Black Sea region, including the four battlegroups in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia that Allies approved after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. These efforts are welcome and consistent with United States strategic priorities for the region.

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND (CENTCOM)

Question. To what extent does achieving United States national security interests in the Middle East require a continuous United States military presence there, in your view? In your opinion, is the current United States Force presence in the Middle East appropriately sized? Please explain your answer. (OPR: ISA, OCR: SPC)

Answer. In accordance with the National Defense Strategy, the Department continues to right-size its forward military presence in the Middle East to address major security challenges in effective and sustainable ways. At present, over 30,000 personnel are deployed to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, along with critical capabilities. The Department stands ready to flow additional forces to the region, if necessary. The Department also integrates with allies and partners to enhance interoperability on a daily basis, sustaining cooperative relationships that have developed over decades.

Question. What opportunities exist for increasing burden-sharing with United States regional and European partners to counter threats emanating from and affecting the CENTCOM AOR? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The United States relies on its capable and resilient partners to maintain regional stability and provide a secure environment. Our decades-long relationships in the region focus on advancing interoperability with partner militaries and expanding coalitions to address shared concerns. For example, the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC) counters repeated Iranian attacks on commercial shipping in the region. Jordan's recent decision to join the IMSC demonstrates the important role our partners play in contributing to regional security. We will continue to encourage additional participation in security initiatives and opportunities to improve interoperability and cooperation.

Question. To what extent is the Middle East relevant to great power competition? How should DOD consider countering Russia and China in the Middle East, in your view? Do you believe there are other elements of national power and policy tools might be useful? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The Middle East is a key theater for strategic competition. China has demonstrated its intent to bolster its standing in the Middle East and Russia continues to destabilize the region through its military activities in Syria and its cooperation with Iran.

China has no intention of improving regional security. Its renewed engagement with Iran, its use of commercial exploitation for financial gain, and its efforts to buildup its military infrastructure in the region are concerning. In Syria, Russia prevents the United Nations and aid organizations from delivering critical humanitarian aid to those in need and interferes with the efforts of the United States and coalition partners to defeat ISIS. Russia's continued purchase of Iranian military equipment for use in Ukraine presents a threat to security in Europe and challenges the rules-based international order.

The United States retains many advantages, including our economic power, democratic values, military might, and global alliances. By supporting regional partners and affirming shared interests in common threats, the United States can maintain its position as the partner of choice in the Middle East. The United States can approach both competition and cooperation from a position of strength by capitalizing on these advantages. The United States also must pursue sustained diplomacy to advance our interests and de-escalate regional tensions.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

Question. In your view, what are the current United States strategic interests in Afghanistan? (OPR: OSCA)

Answer. The United States' vital national security interest in Afghanistan is to ensure it cannot be used as a safe haven from which terrorist groups can launch attacks against the United States or our interests and allies abroad. Working with allies and partners to avoid humanitarian crisis and/or economic collapse in Afghanistan is also strategically important for broader regional stability. The United States has further enduring interests in continuing our ongoing work to resettle our Afghan partners and in advocating for the rights of Afghan women and girls, in line with United States values.

Question. Is the United States adequately postured to conduct effective over the horizon counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan? Please explain your answer. (OPR: SOLIC, OCR: OSCA)

Answer. A primary responsibility of the Department of Defense (DOD) is defending our citizens from terrorist threats that could emanate from around the globe, including Afghanistan. If confirmed, I will review the DOD posture and ensure we maintain an operational architecture with the capability to detect threats in Afghanistan and conduct counterterrorism operations to disrupt potential threats.

I will also work with our COCOMs to advise the Secretary in innovating and modernizing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities to address any identified gaps.

Question. How would you assess the strategic relationship between the United States and Pakistan? Do you view that relationship as having changed as a result of the transition of forces from Afghanistan in August 2021? If so, how? (OPR: IPSA)

Answer. Pakistan is an important, yet challenging partner. If confirmed, I will work with Pakistan defense leaders to build a constructive defense relationship based on shared security objectives, such as countering the threats from groups such as the Islamic State—Khorasan (ISIS-K) and promoting regional stability. These objectives are enduring and the withdrawal of United States Forces from Afghanistan did not change the strategic rationale for our relationship with Pakistan.

Question. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to United States relations with Pakistan, particularly in terms of the bilateral defense relationship? (OPR: IPSA)

Answer. The United States has enduring security objectives in Pakistan, and if confirmed, my objective would be to preserve the defense relationship based on cooperation in areas of mutual interest. These areas could include working with Pakistan to defeat terrorist threats posed by al Qaeda and the Islamic State—Khorasan, promote peace and security along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, enhance Pakistan's capacity to respond to disasters and provide humanitarian relief, and develop the next generation of Pakistan's military leaders.

Syria and Iraq

Question. What is your understanding of current United States strategy and objectives in Syria? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The United States military mission in Syria is to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS. The broader objectives of United States Government policy are to expand humanitarian access, maintain existing cease-fires, pursue accountability measures, and ensure that ISIS cannot resurge. The Administration continues to support a political process led by the Syrian people, as laid out in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254.

Question. From a DOD standpoint, what must be done to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS, in your view? What non-military efforts are necessary to sustain the enduring defeat of ISIS? (OPR: SOLIC, OCR: ISA)

Answer. To ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS, the United States must maintain pressure on the remaining ISIS elements in Iraq and Syria by advising, assisting, and enabling local vetted partner forces. The United States, in conjunction with international and local partners, must also seek secure and humane methods of detaining former ISIS fighters in northeast Syria and displaced persons living in camps, while encouraging the international community to repatriate these individ-

uals to their communities of origin. Stabilization and rebuilding communities—particularly in Syria—will also require significant non-military investment and intervention.

Partnerships are also foundationally important for the enduring defeat of ISIS. Our leadership of the 86-member Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS is a core component of ensuring that lasting defeat. Collectively, we and our partners have proven successful at generating the will and capabilities—ranging from military to a broad array of non-military capabilities—required for the defeat of ISIS. Maintaining the Coalition's cohesion in our efforts against the ISIS global network is essential for our success.

Question. If Assad's forces focus their attacks on United States Forces in the region, how would you recommend that the U.S. respond? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The Department of Defense's mission in Syria is to enable the enduring defeat of ISIS. United States Forces always maintain the right to self-defense.

Question. In your view, should United States troop levels in Syria be tied to the achievement of certain conditions on the ground? If so, and if confirmed, what conditions would you factor into your recommendation to the President on future troop levels in Syria? (OPR: ISA, OCR: SOLIC)

Answer. The Department of Defense's mission in Syria is to enable the enduring defeat of ISIS. If confirmed, I will evaluate our strategy and conditions for progress in Syria.

Question. In your view, do United States troops in Syria help counter Russian influence in the Middle East? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The Department of Defense's mission in Syria is to enable the enduring defeat of ISIS. With the confluence of numerous actors in the region, it is important that all militaries conduct themselves in a professional manner and that we de-conflict our movements to ensure our forces are protected.

Question. In your view, do United States troops in Syria help counter Iranian influence in the Middle East? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The Department of Defense's mission in Syria is to enable the enduring defeat of ISIS. We encourage all actors to conduct themselves in a professional manner, and the United States will not hesitate to respond in self-defense to any threat.

Question. What is your understanding of the current United States strategy and objectives in Iraq? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The Department of Defense's mission in Syria is to enable the enduring defeat of ISIS. We encourage all actors to conduct themselves in a professional manner, and the United States will not hesitate to respond in self-defense to any threat.

Question. What steps would you recommend for continuing to normalize security assistance to the Iraqi Security Forces in the coming years? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. Normalizing our support to the Iraqi security forces requires close partnership between DOD and the State Department. An important factor will be Iraq's continued commitment to building on the progress made on the operational and institutional capabilities of the Iraqi security forces. Although the Iraqi security forces have demonstrated tremendous progress, there is still more work to be done together.

Question. What steps do you recommend to counter Iranian-backed attacks on United States Forces in Syria and Iraq? (OPR: ISA)——

Answer. Normalizing our support to the Iraqi security forces requires close partnership between DOD and the State Department. An important factor will be Iraq's continued commitment to building on the progress made on the operational and institutional capabilities of the Iraqi security forces. Although the Iraqi security forces have demonstrated tremendous progress, there is still more work to be done together.

Iran

Question. What is your assessment of the current military threat posed by Iran? (Review: ISA)

Answer. Iran continues to pose a serious conventional and unconventional threat to U.S. personnel and regional partners. Iran's continued support for violent, non-State actors, threats to the free flow of commerce, and nuclear advances destabilize the region and threaten U.S. and partner interests. The advances in Iran's nuclear program shorten the timeline for Iran to develop a nuclear weapon, should Iranian leadership decide to pursue one. Meanwhile, Tehran continues to make progress developing its missile and UAV programs, increasing the threat to United States personnel and facilities in the region and partners and allies in the Middle East. The Administration is also concerned about Iran's growing support for Russia's war in Ukraine.

Question. Are United States military forces and capabilities currently deployed to the CENTCOM AOR adequate to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats posed by Iran? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The Department of Defense continually assesses the security environment and reviews its military posture based on the threat and global demand for forces. The United States has demonstrated that it will not hesitate to respond in self-defense and that it can surge forces to the Middle East in response to an increased Iranian threat, as we are currently doing in the maritime domain.

Question. What is your understanding of the objectives of the U.S. security strategy with respect to Iran? What is the role of the U.S. military in this strategy? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The United States seeks to deny Iran a nuclear weapon and to deter aggressive Iranian behavior throughout the region. The Department of Defense seeks to achieve these goals and address Iranian malign activity through posture, planning, and partnerships. The Department regularly updates plans to address Iranian provocations and is integrating the capabilities of partners to more effectively counter Iran's destabilizing activities.

Question. How do you view military cooperation between Iran and Russia? In your opinion, has this partnership affected Middle Eastern regional security? Please explain your answer. (OPR: ISA)

Answer. Deepening Iranian-Russian defense cooperation is harmful to Ukraine, Iran's neighbors, and the international community. Iran is gaining important insights from the performance of its UAVs on the Ukrainian battlefield, which will drive improvements in their development and manufacturing of these systems. This will result in the proliferation of better, more capable UAVs throughout the Middle East. As Russia's top military backer, Iran is fueling Russia's war and enabling Russia to strike Kyiv and terrorize the Ukrainian population with Iranian UAVs. In return, Russia has been offering Iran unprecedented defense cooperation, including on missiles, electronics, and air defense.

Question. Are there any circumstances under which you would recommend taking military action against Iran in response to its support for attacks on United States personnel in the region, or in response to its threats against former U.S. officials and American citizens based in the United States? Please explain. (OPR: ISA)

Answer. A role of the Department of Defense is to provide options for the President. The Department regularly updates plans to address a wide variety of contingencies. If confirmed, I will seek to provide principled and direct advice to the Secretary of Defense should the President require military options.

Yemen

Question. What are the United States national security interests in Yemen? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The primary United States national security interest in Yemen remains ensuring that groups such as al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIS-Yemen can no longer maintain a safe haven from which to conduct attacks against the United States Homeland. Additionally, Iran's malign activities in Yemen continue to contribute to instability in the region by threatening the territory of our Gulf partners (including Saudi Arabia) and freedom of navigation. It is in the United States interest to increase pressure on all parties in Yemen to reach a permanent cessation of hostilities. A political solution is the only long-term solution to the crisis.

Question. What are the implications of the Biden Administration's decision to cease offensive support operations to the Saudi-led coalition? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The Administration's decision to end offensive support to the war in Yemen helped bring about conditions for the best opportunity for peace since the conflict began. At the same time, the Department has maintained its commitment to Saudi Arabia by providing air defense support, intelligence-sharing, and other support to the Kingdom to defend its territory, people, and the 70,000 United States citizens who reside there. Since the policy decision on the conflict, our Saudi partners have constructively supported the United States and UN-led efforts with offers for comprehensive cease-fires and proposals to negotiate an end to the war. The environment created by the April 2022 UN-mediated truce presents the best opportunity Yemen has had for peace in several years. Since the formal truce expired in October 2022, all sides continue to refrain from cross-border strikes, and the Republic of Yemen Government and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continue uphold their commitments to the truce to despite its expiration.

Egypt

Question. What is your assessment of the security situation in Egypt and the U.S.-Egypt security relationship? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. Egypt faces a number of security challenges, including ISIS-Sinai Province (ISIS-SP), the ongoing conflict in Libya, regional tensions over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), and border security threats. Despite the challenges, the United States considers Egypt an essential partner for maintaining regional security and stability. U.S.-Egypt security cooperation focuses on counterterrorism and border security. Egypt also provides crucial assistance in anti-trafficking and regional security operations, which advance both United States and Egyptian security.

Question. What role does the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) play in the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty? Should the United States maintain its military deployment to the MFO? What would be the risks of reducing this commitment? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. The Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) has served to provide reassurance to both Israel and Egypt by ensuring both parties adhere to the security provisions of the 1979 Egypt-Israel Treaty of Peace. For over 40 years, the MFO's presence and organization have provided Egypt and Israel a trusted mechanism to resolve disputes, avoid conflict, and foster dialog on shared security concerns in the Sinai Peninsula.

U.S. contributions to this mission encourage other countries' participation and bolster U.S. credibility as a leader in diplomatic and security initiatives globally. Any changes to the level of United States support to the MFO would need to take into consideration potential impacts on the MFO's mission, the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, United States obligations under applicable international agreements, regional stability, and would include extensive interagency and partner consultation.

Reducing United States commitment to this vital peacekeeping mission would risk destabilizing Israel-Egypt relations at a time in which the Abraham Accords and Negev Forum have improved prospects for Arab-Israeli ties.

Question. In your view, should the United States continue to provide defense articles and services purchased by the Egyptian military using United States Foreign Military Financing funds? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. United States Foreign Military Financing (FMF) plays an important role in strengthening the strategic partnership with Egypt and supporting Egypt's legitimate defense needs. Any changes to the United States FMF program with Egypt would require a coordinated interagency review to ensure that United States national security interests are protected. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing all of our bilateral defense relationships.

Question. What is your assessment of the Muslim Brotherhood? In your view, to what extent has the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology influenced other Islamist groups across the region, including U.S.-designated terrorist organizations? Please be specific. (OPR: ISA)

Answer. At this time, I understand that the Administration has not determined that Muslim Brotherhood meets the criteria for a foreign terrorist organization (FTO). In January 2021, the State Department designated Harakat Sawa'd Misr (HASM) as an FTO. HASM is a violent group that has carried out assassinations and other attacks that have killed dozens of Egyptian civilians, and its leaders were previously associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. If confirmed, I would remain committed to working with the State Department to take appropriate action against foreign groups engaged in terrorist activity.

Question. What is your assessment of Egypt's deepening ties with Russia? Where do United States and Russian interests converge in Egypt? Where do they diverge? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. Egypt is actively diversifying and deepening its military cooperation with other foreign partners, including Russia. Egypt's influence in the region and strategic location, including its control of the Suez Canal, make Egypt a key leader in maintaining regional stability.

Egypt's deepening ties with Russia have been demonstrated in recent years through key leader engagements, military drills, joint infrastructure projects, and Egypt's pursuit of Russian military equipment, such as Su-35 fighter aircraft. The United States has an interest in an Egypt that is politically inclusive and economically secure with a professional military force that can protect its land and maritime borders and counter terrorism in the Sinai, and that respects civilian control of the military and human rights. Russia does not share those interests.

UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND (AFRICOM)

Question. In your view, what should be the role of AFRICOM in NDS implementation? (OPR: SPC, OCR: ISA)

Answer. The NDS indicates that the Department will prioritize VEO threats against the United States Homeland and vital United States national security interests, working by, with, and through our African partners. It also states that the Department will support interagency efforts to disrupt malign PRC and Russian activities on the continent. USAFRICOM plays a critical role implementing the NDS—including through executing Department of Defense operations, exercises, and security cooperation on the African continent, island nations, and surrounding waters.

Question. What is your assessment of the availability and predictability of forces and capabilities to support the AFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan and crisis response? (OPR: SPC, OCR: ISA)

Answer. The Department of Defense's priority is aligning mission requirements with the President's strategic priorities, and evaluating the military posture and other tools required to meet those requirements. This is the approach taken in the United States Africa Command area of responsibility (AOR), and every AOR. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Joint Staff and USAFRICOM to assess the adequacy of DOD's Joint Force approach to meet day-to-day and crisis response requirements in theater.

Question. What is your assessment of current U.S. counterterrorism strategies in AFRICOM? (OPR: SOLIC, OCR: ISA)

Answer. The National Defense Strategy underscored that DOD seeks a counterterrorism approach in Africa that is sustainable, in light of many competing interests, and calls on us to prioritize disrupting violent extremist organization (VEO) threats against the United States Homeland and vital national security interests by working "by, with, and through" our African partners. I believe this is the right approach—given the current strategic environment—to apply pressure on Africa-based VEOs, supported by good governance and economic activities to address the root causes of instability. This will create the most sustainable, enduring framework for managing the terrorist threat moving forward. However, the President does and should retain the ability to take unilateral action to swiftly disrupt any imminent threats that may arise against the U.S. Homeland or vital U.S. interests.

Question. What do you assess to be the strategic objectives of Russia and China in Africa? (Review: ISA)

Answer. I believe Russia and the PRC are offering African nations short-term economic investment, destabilizing private military companies, and security agreements to present themselves as alternatives to western partners, without regard for long-term security of African nations.

Question. What is your assessment of the efficacy of the current United States strategy to compete against Russia and China to be the security partner of choice in Africa? What metrics do you believe should be used to assess progress in this regard? (Review: ISA, IPSA)

Answer. Russia and the PRC are offering African nations economic investment, diplomatic engagement, and security alternatives to western providers. If confirmed, I would seek to position the United States to be a superior and responsible alternative. To do this, the United States needs to develop cost competitive alternatives, demonstrate our commitment to the continent, and communicate an affirmative message about United States-African partnership. U.S. diplomacy is based on partnership and respect for each other's interests.

Somalia

Question. What is your assessment of the current security situation in Somalia? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. As I understand it, we are seeing the largest offensive in 5 years of Somali security forces partnering with local communities to combat violence and extortion by al-Shabaab. This is a pivotal moment in Somalia, and we want to ensure that our partners can capitalize on this momentum. We have, however, also seen an uptick in al-Shabaab activity recently. I believe this is a part of a larger effort to stoke fear in the Somali people as the Somali National Army reestablishes control of key Somali towns. It is ultimately for Somalia's leaders to determine the structure of their Federal governing system, to secure their own country, and to meet the needs of Somalia's people.

Question. What is your understanding of the current United States strategy and objectives in Somalia? (OPR: ISA, OCR: SOLIC)

Answer. The reestablished United States presence and support from our partners and allies and multilateral efforts have signaled a continued commitment to our So-

mali partners and provides them with the tools they need to degrade al-Shabaab in support of President Hassan Sheikh's larger campaign to bring stability to Somalia. I believe that the United States has a vested interest in ensuring that the partners we have spent years training and advising to go after al-Shabaab can seamlessly integrate into the broader Somali force structure. I understand that we are actively working with other international partners across many sectors of the Somali Government to ensure we are working collectively and transparently to advance shared goals.

Libya

Question. What is your assessment of current United States national security interests in Libya? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. I believe the United States seeks a unified, democratically elected government in Libya and the removal of all foreign fighters that prohibit Libya from moving forward to a path of democratic order as elected by the citizens.

Question. What is your assessment of external actors operating in Libya and where their objectives align and conflict with those of the United States? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. Some external actors appear to be working toward a unified military and democratically elected and unified government. In this respect their activities align with U.S. objectives. Other actors, notably the Wagner Group, are in Libya for their own advancement and profit, which does not align with U.S. objectives.

West Africa and the Sahel

Question. What is your assessment of current security situation in West Africa and the Sahel and its impact on United States security interests? (OPR: ISA)

Answer. Although USAFRICOM's first CT priority is to counter Al Shabaab in the Horn of Africa, obtaining indicators and warnings of Violent Extremist Organization activity in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, and disrupting the efforts of these VEOs to further expand their activities is a significant priority. Countries where United States efforts had been successful have been compromised by the trend in democratic backsliding in the region, as illustrated most recently in Niger and Gabon. This situation has been exacerbated by malign Russian influence and has impacted DOD's cooperation with some African partners, creating opportunities for our global competitors to exploit. As we move forward, it will be critical to balance our imperative to bolster our allies and partners by maintaining pressure on VEO networks and countering Russian and PRC influence with the sometimes conflicting requirement to bolster our allies and partners' democratic values.

Question. What is your assessment of the role and objectives of external actors in the region, particularly Russia, or Russian back proxies like the Wagner Group and China? (Review: ISA)

Answer. I believe Russia, the PRC, and groups like Wagner are offering African nations economic investment, diplomatic acknowledgment, and security agreements to present themselves as alternatives to Western providers. In some instances, I believe the goal of groups like Wagner is to displace United States and Western influence and undermine democracy. For this reason, we must be able to present an affirmative vision for the region and provide African countries with options.

Question. What is your assessment of the utility of support provided by the United States to regional and external partners operating in the region in supporting U.S. security objectives, particularly support provided pursuant to section 331 of title 10, United States Code? (Review: ISA, SPC)

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to assessing the support the United States provides to all partners, including those in Africa and their utility to United States security objectives.

UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND (SOUTHCOM)

Western Hemisphere

Question. In your view, what should be the Department's strategic priorities in the Western Hemisphere? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. Both the U.S. National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy underscore the importance of a stable, peaceful, and democratic Western Hemisphere to the security of the U.S. Homeland. If confirmed, I would continue the Department's work to deepen partnerships with Western Hemisphere nations based on a commitment to democratic governance, civilian control of the military, the rule of law, and human rights. That should be DOD's No. 1 priority in the Western Hemisphere. If confirmed, I would also advance the Department's priorities to counter external State actor influence in the region, and to build the capacity of hemisphere partners to address transboundary threats, including those posed by transnational threat networks, malign actors in cyberspace, and natural disasters.

Question. Is the Department appropriately resourced to support these priorities? If not, where do you assess the Department is accepting the greatest risk? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. If confirmed, I will evaluate the Department's allocation of resources for defense efforts in the Western Hemisphere to determine whether adjustments are appropriate. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary in clearly communicating the Department's resourcing priorities to Congress to ensure that our resources are aligned with our strategic priorities in the region.

Question. If confirmed, what recommendations would you make to the President and Secretary of Defense to deter Russian, Cuban, and Chinese influence in the SOUTHCOM AOR and do you think these influences threaten hemispheric security and prosperity? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. I believe that malign influence from these actors in the region is concerning and presents challenges to the security of the United States. If confirmed, I would recommend that the Department advance its defense partnerships with countries in the region to promote our shared values of democracy and respect for human rights, rule of law, and a rules-based international order, which have been the foundation of hemispheric security for decades.

The Department should continue to demonstrate why it remains the trusted partner of our hemisphere neighbors.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Question. Many of the internal security challenges in Latin America are associated with transnational criminal networks.

What types of United States assistance are appropriate for Latin American countries given that these challenges emanate from non-State actors? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue the Department of Defense's commitment to maintain strong defense ties with our key partners in the Western Hemisphere. As the United States engages with its partners, we recognize that many countries in the region face real and persistent threats from non-State actors, including the transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) that derive their influence from trafficking in narcotics and other illicit activity. TCOs pose a serious law enforcement challenge to the United States and other countries in the region. The response will require a whole of government approach—including working with diplomats, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies—and with partner nations, to combat the influence of TCOs and uphold the rule of law.

Venezuela

Question. What is your assessment of the current situation in Venezuela? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. The situation in Venezuela today and into the near future requires a whole-of-government, multinational effort to pave the way toward free and fair elections. If confirmed, I will work with our interagency and international partners to work toward this end.

Question. What is your assessment of the role and objectives of external actors in Venezuela, particularly Russia, Cuba, Iran, and China? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. I believe that external actors in Venezuela pose a continued risk to the restoration of democracy in that country. If confirmed, the Department of Defense will continue to monitor their activity in Venezuela.

Question. If confirmed, what would be your policy recommendations on how the Department should address Venezuela? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. If confirmed, I would recommend that any Department of Defense actions be in support of a broader United States Government strategy to enable Venezuela to move toward free and fair elections and a peaceful transition of power.

Colombia

Question. Plan Colombia has enabled the Colombian government to make significant gains against the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and other paramilitary forces in Colombia. Additionally, Colombia has become a security exporter in the region due to its advances in capabilities and professionalism.

What are your views regarding: (1) the current military and political situation in Colombia; and (2) the effectiveness and sustainability of ongoing DOD programs in Colombia? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. The U.S. and Colombia share a strong military-to-military relationship, as demonstrated by Colombia's recent designation as a Major Non-NATO ally. The United States has a history of strong collaboration with the Colombian military.

Colombia is a core strategic partner in the region, and if confirmed, I would continue to work with Colombia on defense sector institution building, international security cooperation, strengthening strategic intelligence capacity—including counter-

narcotics, territorial stabilization, and peace agreement implementation—and emergent transboundary challenges. These efforts promote regional stability and advance United States interests in the region.

Question. Does the Department require any additional capabilities or legal authorities in Colombia, given developments in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. If confirmed, I will work across the Policy organization and the broader Department of Defense to determine whether additional capabilities or legal authorities are needed as the Department continues its work to employ counterterrorism and counternarcotics capabilities and authorities to the greatest extent possible in Colombia.

Over the last two decades, United States support was central to building up Colombia's defense and security capabilities, enabling Colombia to become a core regional security partner. The United States can leverage Colombia's defense and security capabilities and expertise to train other partner governments in the region. By replicating this model elsewhere, DOD can buildup its partners' defense capabilities and then rely on them to train neighboring partner militaries. It could allow for enhanced regionalization—bolstering regional security.

Question. Are there lessons to be learned from Plan Colombia that may be useful in addressing security and governance challenges elsewhere in the region and beyond? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. I believe that DOD has focused on building up Colombia's defense and security capabilities, which has enabled Colombia to become a core regional security partner. The United States can leverage Colombia's defense and security capabilities and expertise to

train other partner governments in the region, which will help buildup partners' defense capabilities to further bolster regional security.

Cuba

Question. What is your assessment of Cuba's activities and objectives in the Western Hemisphere? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. Cuba is clearly an undemocratic regime that does not respect human rights. If confirmed, I would support the Administration's direction to support a stable, prosperous, and free country for the Cuban people.

Question. Under what circumstances, if any, would you recommend modifications to the security relationship between the United States and Cuba? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. I understand that DOD maintains only limited contacts with Cuba through longstanding, practical meetings regarding routine issues at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay. If confirmed, I will work with interagency partners to ensure that U.S. interests are protected.

UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND (NORTHCOM)

Homeland Defense

Question. How do you believe the Department should best prepare for and, if necessary, respond to airborne surveillance threats like the Chinese surveillance balloon that passed through United States airspace in early 2023? (Review HDHA)

Answer. The Department of Defense must be able to identify and defend against threats to the Homeland. The 2022 National Defense Strategy, commits the Department to enhancing domain awareness. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee to enhance the integration of ground and space-based sensors and work bilaterally with Canada to strengthen NORAD's capabilities.

Arctic

Question. What changes, if any, are necessary for the Department of Defense to carry out their lines of effort in support of the 2022 National Strategy for the Arctic Region? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. The Department of Defense has not issued an Arctic Strategy since 2019. Updating the Department's strategic approach to the Arctic will be helpful in aligning DOD resourcing to strategy and serve as a strong strategic messaging tool to Allies, partners, and competitors.

Question. What threat, if any, do Russian and Chinese activities in the Arctic pose to United States security interests? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. Given its location, the Arctic is a potential forum for expanded strategic competition. Both competitors' activities in the Arctic could pose threats to freedom of navigation, as well as United States sovereignty and economic interests. The United States cannot afford to concede primacy in the region to either nation. Russia considers itself the preeminent Arctic power and views the Arctic region as critical to national security and a source of energy and resources. Consequently, the

Russian military has invested heavily in its Arctic military presence in the years prior to Russia's reinvasion of Ukraine, creating new units, refurbishing infrastructure, and establishing new bases. Russia also asserts excessive and illegal maritime claims in the region, including the right to regulate Arctic waters and restrict navigational rights and freedoms guaranteed under international law. Russia's military investments reinforce its ability to enforce those claims and potentially seek to control what it calls "the Northern Sea Route."

The People's Republic of China (PRC) increasingly seeks access and influence in the Arctic region, and its claim to be a "near-Arctic state" reflects its intention to play a larger role in the region. The PRC does not yet possess the ability to project significant military power into the Arctic, but it is pursuing an increasing role in shaping governance and security affairs in the region. China's activities in the Arctic are largely civilian in nature to date, but they likely include dual-purpose activities that could enable a future PRC Arctic military presence.

Question. To what extent should our partners in the Arctic share the burden of countering Russia and China where those two competitors threaten shared security interests? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. The United States approach to the Arctic must be conducted in close cooperation with our key Allies and Sweden. Our Arctic Allies and partners have significant experience in and focus on operating in extreme Arctic conditions. These nations bring additional capabilities and geographic reach to the table, and there is great potential benefit in increased cooperation, data sharing, joint exercises, and combined operations if and when necessary. Our Allies are our greatest strength in the Arctic region, and the more interoperable our militaries become, the better prepared the United States is, alone and as part of an alliance.

Question. What, in your view, are United States defense interests in the Arctic region? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. As an Arctic nation, the United States's primary defense interest in the Arctic is to secure the Homeland. The best way to achieve this goal is to strive for an Arctic region that is stable and characterized by high levels of cooperation among our Arctic Allies and partners. New sea lanes that will be opening in the coming years pose a number of challenges and opportunities. While new sea lanes mean new opportunities for transit and commerce, the resulting competition for resources and ocean access could bring about new flash points. Preserving navigational rights and freedoms in Arctic waterways will be key to maintaining a stable and secure Arctic region. Developments in the Arctic must not be allowed to harm the ability of the United States, its Allies, and partners, to prevail in conflict in case deterrence fails vis-à-vis our competitors.

Question. Does the Department of Defense have the appropriate capabilities and assets to meet its goals in the Arctic? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. The Arctic is a strategically important region for the United States, and DOD is closely monitoring the capabilities of competitors in the region. The National Defense Strategy makes clear that the People's Republic of China challenge is the Department's pacing challenge and that USINDOPACOM is the priority theater for resourcing. By contrast, the NDS articulates a calibrated approach to the Arctic region, with emphasis on increasing domain awareness, early warning, and ISR capabilities and ensuring the Joint Force is prepared for that region to become a venue for increased strategic competition. Our Allies and partners are our greatest strength in the Arctic region, and leading and supporting coordination and interoperability among our Arctic Allies and partners is a capability multiplier for the United States in the Arctic region. If confirmed, I will work within the Department's strategy, force planning, and force employment processes to ensure the Joint Force can effectively implement the National Defense Strategy and other strategic guidance, including with respect to the Arctic region.

Question. United States Forces in Alaska are assigned to INDOPACOM, but also have homeland defense responsibilities. Are there any changes to the force posture in Alaska, or the assignment of those forces, that you would recommend to ensure that the INDOPACOM and homeland defense missions are adequately staffed in the event of a contingency? (OPR: SPC)

Answer. Alaska's location within the Indo-Pacific region makes the State a strategically important region for our country. Alaska-based forces provide strategic advantages across the whole national defense spectrum, providing a deterrence to potential aggressors and security to our allies, all while supporting critical homeland defense requirements. If confirmed, I would seek close engagement with the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, and Military Departments to ensure no seams in DOD's approach to achieving the range of our defense objectives supported through United States Forces in Alaska.

DEFENSE SUPPORT TO CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES

Question. What is the role of the Lead Federal Agency when DOD provides support to civilian authorities? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. Consistent with their authorities and responsibilities in law and national policy, Lead Federal Agencies coordinate the Federal response to incidents. As such, they would normally request specific support from DOD, for instance under the Stafford Act or the Economy Act. When DOD support is authorized and involves the use of military forces, DOD retains command and control of its military forces.

Question. In your view, are the procedures by which other Federal, State, and Local agencies request DOD support efficient and effective? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. To the best of my knowledge, yes; however, I defer to Federal, State, and local agencies to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of their procedures. If confirmed, I will have the opportunity to review the efficiency and effectiveness of DOD's assessments of and responses to Federal, State, and local agency requests for DOD support.

Question. In your view, are DOD procedures for evaluating and approving the provision of support requested by a civil authority efficient, effective, and timely? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. It is my understanding that DOD's procedures are efficient, effective, timely, and field-tested. DOD works with its Federal, State, and local partners to plan, prepare, and exercise for responses to major disasters and emergencies and the safety and security of national special security events. If confirmed, I will have the opportunity to review these plans and procedures and evaluate how well they have worked in real-world situations.

Question. What is your understanding of the factors that are considered in determining whether DOD will provide support to a civil authority? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. Consistent with the law and DOD policy, DOD considers six factors: (1) legality (would providing the requested support be in compliance with law?); (2) lethality (would the requested support involve the potential use of lethal force by or against DOD personnel?); (3) risk (would providing the requested support pose an unacceptable risk to the safety of DOD personnel?); (4) cost (will DOD be reimbursed for the support and what effect will providing the support have on the DOD budget?); (5) appropriateness (would providing the requested support be appropriate and in DOD's interest?); and (6) readiness (how will providing the requested support impact DOD's ability to perform its other primary missions?).

Question. Are the procedures DOD employs to secure appropriate reimbursement for any support it provides to a civil authority efficient and effective, in your view? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. It is my understanding that DOD's procedures regarding reimbursement for support of civil authorities are efficient and effective. If confirmed, I will review how efficient and effective these procedures have been and, if necessary, recommend improvements.

Question. Under what conditions should DOD assist civil authorities in securing the southwest border, particularly by providing Active Duty forces? (Review: HDHA)

Answer. Consistent with the law and DOD policy, DOD support of civil authorities in securing the southern border should be limited to circumstances in which providing support does not adversely affect the military preparedness of the United States or negatively affect military training, operations, readiness, or other military requirements.

If confirmed, I will also seek to work with DHS to help it develop the capabilities and capacity to carry out its statutory mission, and to ensure that DOD support does not pose an unacceptable risk to military preparedness, training, operations, readiness, or other military requirements.

Question. What types of assistance in this context are inappropriate, in your view? (Review: HDHA)

Answer. DOD is prepared to support civilian law enforcement agencies consistent with the needs of U.S. military preparedness and while recognizing and conforming to the legal limitations on direct DOD involvement in civilian law enforcement activities. Examples of assistance that would be inconsistent with the law and DOD policy includes direct participation in law enforcement activities or assistance that would negatively affect military preparedness, training, operations, readiness, or other military requirements.

COVID-19

Question. What is your view of DOD's response to the COVID-19 pandemic? What aspects of it could be improved? What role do you envision for DOD in pandemic response moving forward? (OPR: HDHA, OCR: SPACE)

Answer. It is my understanding that DOD took great care to protect the health of its military and civilian personnel, sustain worldwide defense missions, and, at the same time, play an incredible supporting role in our Nation's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. In future pandemics, I expect that DOD will continue to play a very important role. If confirmed, I will review DOD's response and plans to identify opportunities to preserve or improve DOD's preparedness.

Question. Are there any types of support that the Department of Defense should not provide, in your view? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. In my view, yes. For example, DOD should not provide support that is inconsistent with the law, such as support involving direct participation in a search, seizure, arrest, or other similar law enforcement activities by military personnel that is not otherwise specifically authorized by law.

Question. To what extent does providing defense support to civil authorities during the coronavirus crisis impact readiness? How should DOD think about these tradeoffs? (OPR: HDHA)

When military personnel provide Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) on a large scale, there can be negative effects on readiness. These readiness impacts should be balanced with supporting the safety and security of the American people in times of crisis.

SOUTHWEST BORDER

Question. Fentanyl, most of which enters this country from Mexico, is responsible for the deaths of approximately 70,000 Americans per year. Insecurity across our southwest border also contributes to human trafficking and illegal migration, which Mexico's criminal cartels are exploiting for financial gain.

Is the fentanyl crisis a national security crisis in your view? Why or why not? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. Fentanyl is a national security crisis. Drug overdose deaths of Americans have increased 781 percent since 1999, with fentanyl responsible for approximately 68 percent of current overdoses. The ease of production and potency of fentanyl pose a unique danger that challenges our ability to defend our Homeland, while financing criminal and violent extremist organizations.

Question. What role do you believe that DOD should play in addressing the crisis at the southwest border? What aspects of the current DOD role at the southwest border could be improved? (OPR: HDHA)

Answer. DOD's long-standing role has been one of support to DHS, which is, by law, responsible for securing our Nation's borders. However, in my view, if DHS is unable to secure our Nation's borders without DOD support, our Nation could face serious risks were DOD's capabilities and forces required elsewhere, such as to respond to an overseas military contingency. DOD support should be reserved for circumstances when military-unique capabilities are critical, and even then should only be provided temporarily.

Question. To what extent do you view the Mexican armed forces as partners in countering fentanyl, human trafficking, illegal migration, and the criminal cartels other illicit activities? Are there ways that you would recommend expanding cooperation with the Mexican armed forces? Do you see any risks in doing so? (Review: HDHA)

Answer. If confirmed, I would continue the Department of Defense's commitment to maintain strong defense ties with Mexico, a partner nation that DOD works with on many important issues including trade, immigration, climate change, and North American defense. I recognize that Mexico, like many countries in the region, face real and persistent threats from non-State actors, including the transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) that derive their influence from trafficking in narcotics, illegal migration and other illicit products. The response will require a whole of government approach—including working with diplomats, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies—and with partner nations in the region, in order to combat the influence of these cartels and uphold the rule of law. I believe DOD should continue to support law enforcement efforts to disrupt these organizations, in partnership with the Mexican government, as part of a whole-of-government approach.

Question. The Department purchased \$260 million of border wall construction materials, which were intended to be used for extending the southwest border wall. Rather than using those materials for that purpose, however, the Department paid

to store those materials until approximately May 2023, and then transferred them to other government agencies or auctioned off those materials for other purposes.

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security is the lead Federal agency for border security and, depending on the situation, DOD plays a supporting role. I understand that there are provisions included in the House and Senate-passed versions of the NDAA that, if enacted into law, would direct the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress a plan to utilize, transfer, or donate any remaining excess border wall construction materials to States on the southern border of the United States. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring the Department acts in accordance with the law.

Question. Do you believe that the incomplete barrier along the southwest border should be completed as part of a broader border security policy? Why or why not? (Review: HDHA)

Answer. The Department of Homeland Security is the lead Federal agency for border security and DOD plays a supporting role. I understand that there are provisions included in the House and Senate-passed versions of the NDAA that, if enacted into law, would direct the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress a plan to utilize, transfer, or donate any remaining excess border wall construction materials. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring the Department acts in accordance with the law.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

Question. The NDAA for fiscal year 2017 included provisions designed to enhance the oversight and advocacy of special operations forces. Among other things, these reforms established an administrative chain of command from the Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command through the ASD(SOLIC) to the Secretary of Defense, mirroring the relationship between the Secretaries of the Military Departments and their Service Chiefs.

What is your understanding of the “service secretary-like” responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC) for special operations forces?

Answer. ASD (SOLIC) is the principal civilian advisor to SecDef on special operations and low intensity conflict matters and exercises authority, direction, and control of Commander, USSOCOM for all special operations-peculiar administrative matters relating to the organization, training, and equipping of special operations forces through the administrative chain of command specified in 10 USC 167(f).

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take to affirm the independent role of the ASD(SOLIC) as the “service secretary-like” civilian for special operations forces?

Answer. Civilian oversight is essential for our special operations enterprise just as it is for the services and ASD(SO/LIC) exercises authority, direction, and control of all specialoperations-peculiar administrative matters relating to the organization, training, and equipping of special operations forces. If confirmed, I will continue to support for all elements of SO/LIC, including ASD(SO/LIC)’s role reporting to the Secretary of Defense in conducting Service Secretary-like responsibilities.

Question. How do you differentiate the ASD(SOLIC)’s policy responsibilities from their “service secretary-like” responsibilities for “special-operations peculiar administrative matters relating to the organization, training, and equipping of special operations forces”?

Answer. I understand the ASD(SO/LIC) has a unique dual reporting chain; maintaining a direct reporting line to the Secretary for its Service Secretary-like role in the administrative chain of command over USSOCOM, with full access to the same fora as the Service Secretaries for special operations-peculiar matters; and supporting OUSD(P) in their policy role with policy advice on counternarcotics, stability operations, personnel recovery, crisis response, irregular warfare, and counterterrorism, among other things.

Section 127e and Section 1202 Activities

Question. Section 127e of title 10, U.S. Code, authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide support (including training, funding, and equipment) to regular forces, irregular forces, and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations for the purpose of combatting terrorism. Section 1202 of the NDAA for fiscal year 2018 authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide similar support to forces or individuals supporting or facilitating irregular warfare operations.

What is your assessment of the national security utility of each of these authorities in the current strategic environment? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. I see the 127e authority as providing a relatively low-cost, low-risk, high payoff, sustainable option to maintain pressure on terrorist groups. I believe DOD’s 127e programs are fully in line with the intent of the Administration’s CT policy

to shift the burden of countering terrorist groups to our foreign partners/local authorities. Our 127e partners reduce the threat of terrorist attacks against the United States Homeland and U.S. persons by maintaining pressure on these elements, often preventing or disrupting terrorist attack planning and operations.

“Section 1202” programs facilitate a broad range of special operations irregular warfare activities in direct support of authorized irregular warfare missions, including competing with peer adversaries and preparing for the implementation of operational plans. USSOF does this by, e.g., leveraging 1202-resourced foreign forces, irregular forces, groups or individuals to gain access and placement and to establish critical infrastructure. This program also enables USSOF to develop, enhance, and employ allied and partner access and placement and irregular warfare skills, and to operate in the information environment.

Question. If confirmed, what criteria would you apply to the evaluation of proposals for the use of each of these authorities, with a view to mitigating the risks associated with the conduct of counterterrorism and irregular warfare activities below the level of traditional armed conflict? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. Implementation of the 127e and Section 1202 authorities inherently rely on non-U.S. partners for success. As with any organization, those that succeed have high standards for professional conduct. If confirmed, I will ensure we select participants in these programs based on competencies in trustworthiness and willingness to adhere to U.S. standards, and I would also seek to provide them with appropriate training on laws of armed conflict and human rights.

I am aware of the Feb 2023 GAO report and recommendations for DOD to review and where necessary update guidance for 127e programs, in particular. If confirmed, I will review the progress on implementing these recommendations and apply any lessons learned to DOD instructions on managing these programs.

Question. If confirmed, how would you seek to ensure that recipients of support under these authorities are appropriately vetted to protect against potential human rights and counterintelligence concerns? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. I understand DOD’s Section 127e and 1202 procedures require that candidates be screened during selection and on an annual basis.

If confirmed, I would ensure DOD continually conducts this screening using all available intelligence across multiple data bases. However, the most important aspect of upholding human rights is to continually monitor the actions and behavior of our partners once they have been accepted into DOD programs.

Our servicemembers live and work in close contact with our partners. If confirmed, I would ensure we are clear and open with our expectations for ethical conduct and we remain vigilant for any behavior that does not conform with our ethical standards and immediately remove those people from our programs.

PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

Question. What should be the Department’s role and objectives in supporting global peacekeeping operations? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. The United States is the largest overall financial contributor to the United Nations’ peacekeeping budget in support of global peacekeeping operations. DOD supports the Department of State as the U.S. Government’s policy lead for U.N. Peacekeeping by providing U.S. military officers for assignments in peacekeeping mission headquarters and capacity building support for troop-contributing countries. I understand peacekeeping operations are an effective type of stabilization activity. If confirmed, I would support DOD’s continued efforts to enhance global peacekeeping operations mission performance.

VIOLENT EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS

Question. Despite considerable global investment in the counterterrorism fight, jihadists in dozens of groups and countries continue to pose credible threats to local and regional U.S. interests.

What is your assessment of the threat to United States interests posed by al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and their affiliates and adherents? Which group(s), in your view, present the greatest threat to the United States? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. Terrorism and violent extremism remain a persistent threat to United States interests and our Homeland. Although our pacing challenge is the People’s Republic of China (PRC), we must protect the United States Homeland and our citizens and facilities abroad from violent actors who have the capability and intent to attack us.

Since September 11, 2001, al Qaeda has been degraded to the point where it does not currently pose an acute threat to the United States Homeland. Some of their affiliates, like al-Shabaab, may pose a threat to United States persons in the region,

which is why I believe it is important to continue support to our partners in Somalia and the surrounding region as they seek to break al-Shabaab's hold on parts of their country.

I believe ISIS continues to pose the greatest terrorist threat to the United States and our people globally. Although it may have lost its hold on territory in Iraq and Syria, it has gone back underground and remains committed to their goal of creating a Caliphate, governed by its interpretation of Sharia law. ISIS still produces media that can influence people around the world who share its ideology to conduct attacks and it still recruits dozens of people around the world to join its ranks.

Protecting United States citizens, personnel, and interests across the globe remains DOD's most important task. If confirmed, I will ensure counterterrorism remains a focus of effort at DOD as the department prioritizes integrated deterrence against Russia and the PRC.

Question. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to the United States counterterrorism strategy and DOD's role in supporting it? What metrics would you apply to measure the effectiveness of the strategy? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. The Biden-Harris Administration's approach to counterterrorism is focused on disrupting threats to the United States Homeland and United States persons abroad while shifting the bulk of operations countering regional terrorist groups to the authorities of countries where they are located to prevent those groups from becoming global threats.

I believe these are appropriate goals for a sustainable counterterrorism posture abroad and help ensure we are continuing to protect Americans from terrorism while we focus on our pacing challenge: the People's Republic of China.

If confirmed, I will ensure DOD continues to work with partners and allies and leverage technology to build an enduring, sustainable counterterrorism posture to monitor and disrupt terrorist threats to the Homeland. These actions will degrade the capability of terrorist organizations to function trans-regionally, isolating branches from outside support, and allow foreign partner security forces to address terrorist threats before they reach the United States Homeland.

Question. Do you believe there needs to be a "more resource sustainable" approach to counterterrorism, as directed by the 2018 and 2022 NDS? If so, and if confirmed, what specific actions would you take to promote a "more resource sustainable" approach and how would you assess any risks associated with such an approach? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. I believe that a resource sustainable strategy must focus on working by, with, and through foreign partners to address the terrorist threats that persist across the globe. This must include degrading the capability of terrorist organizations to function trans-regionally by targeting those elements—such as senior terrorist group leaders—that can recruit, fund-raise, and traffic arms and people across borders. Taking this approach serves to isolate various regional branches from their outside support, weakens them, and allows local security forces to handle the threat before it reaches the United States Homeland.

The publicly stated desire of ISIS and like-minded groups to develop global presence reflects a well-understood strategy of extremist groups: overextend an adversary into resource-intensive commitments that eventually deplete national resolve and popular will.

Against individual countries, this global strategy can be effective. Against well-coordinated multilateral partnerships, such as the 86-member Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, this strategy fails. Collectively, the Coalition has the global presence and resources to confront ISIS in and across any region in which it operates—in a manner that is resource sustainable for individual partners.

If confirmed, I will ensure that DOD works with our partners and allies—including the D-ISIS coalition—and leverage technology to monitor these terrorist threats and share information to disrupt their operations.

Question. Should the Department focus principally on terrorist organizations that pose a direct threat to the United States Homeland? If so, how would you mitigate risk posed by other terrorist groups that have such intent but currently lack the capability to do so? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure DOD continues to work with its partners and allies, particularly through multinational forums like the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, to monitor the threat from terrorist groups that do not pose a direct threat to the United States Homeland and ensure we both share information and work with our interagency partners, including the Department of State, to build the capacity of foreign partners to disrupt these other Violent Extremist Organizations through law enforcement operations in the countries they reside in.

COUNTERNARCOTICS AND COUNTER-TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME ACTIVITIES

Question. In your view, what should be the role of the Department in combating narcotics trafficking and transnational organized crime? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. DOD is the lead Federal agency for detecting and monitoring aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States in support of the counter-drug activities of Federal, State, local, and foreign law enforcement agencies. Aside from this detection and monitoring mission, DOD's role in combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime consists of support to interagency partners through enabling capabilities.

Question. If confirmed, how would you prioritize the Department's allocation of resources to combat narcotics trafficking and transnational organized crime? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the scope of DOD's activities to combat narcotics trafficking and transnational organized crime to ensure we are aligned with our interagency law enforcement partners and our international partners. I will ensure that these threats are appropriately prioritized within the DOD Counterdrug Program.

COUNTER THREAT FINANCE

Question. What should be the Department's role in counter-threat finance activities? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. Understanding how our adversaries generate, store, move, and use resources, and working with other U.S. Government (USG) departments and agencies, as well as with partner nations, to deny, disrupt, or defeat and degrade adversaries' illicit financial networks is an important Irregular Warfare capability. I understand that most of DOD's counter-threat finance activity is currently funded by the DOD Counterdrug program and operates within the bounds of DOD's Counterdrug authorities.

Question. In your view, should the Department expand its support to other U.S. Government departments and agencies conducting counter threat finance activities? If so, how? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. DOD is not often the lead agency in countering threat finance and works extensively with other departments and agencies. That said, I understand that the DOD Counterdrug program currently provides counter-threat finance analytic support to several other Departments and Agencies, including the Departments of State, Justice, Treasury, and Homeland Security. If confirmed, I will review the scope of DOD's counter-threat finance activities and assess whether the Department should expand DOD support to other U.S. Government departments and agencies

IRREGULAR WARFARE

Question. Nation states are becoming more aggressive in challenging U.S. interests through the use of asymmetric means that often fall below the threshold of traditional armed conflict, commonly referred to as irregular warfare or "gray zone operations."

What is your understanding of the threat to U.S. interests posed by adversaries in the domain of irregular warfare? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. The People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russian Federation are both major nuclear powers that are also adept at irregular warfare below the threshold of armed conflict. They have both escalated their coercive and malign activities in the "gray zone." The PRC employs state-controlled forces, cyber and space operations, and economic coercion against the United States, its allies, and partners. Russia employs disinformation, cyber, and space operations against the United States and our allies and partners, and irregular proxy forces in multiple countries. North Korea and Iran use similar means at more limited levels. These activities, if left unaddressed, could endanger U.S. military effectiveness now and in the future.

Question. What should be the guiding principles of any DOD strategy to counter threats in the "gray zone," in your view? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. The United States must be judicious in our use of defense resources and efforts to counter competitors' coercive behaviors in the gray zone, as traditional military tools may not always be the most appropriate response. That said, campaigning serves a critical role in disrupting competitors' attempts to advance their objectives through gray zone tactics, especially when integrated for maximum impact with the actions of allies, partners, and other U.S. departments and agencies. This requires discipline, as successful campaigning begins with focused planning

that specifies how an initiative supports our defense priorities, establishes clear connections with the Department's strategies, and incorporates feedback loops.

INFORMATION OPERATIONS

Question. What is your assessment of DOD's ability to conduct effective military operations in the information environment to defend U.S. interests against malign influence activities carried out by State and non-State actors? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. I understand the Department has processes and capabilities in place, or in development, to counter and defend against foreign malign influence operations targeting its forces and missions, such as Military Information Support Operations (MISO), Defense Deception Activities (DDA), cyber effects operations, electromagnetic spectrum operations, and public affairs. The Department's effectiveness to defend U.S. interests against malign influences activities is best when focused on defined defense and military objectives, synchronized across all information capabilities, and when integrated into campaigning with interagency capabilities and partners/allies. If confirmed, I would work to strengthen these processes and capabilities.

Question. In your view, is responsibility for Information Operations clearly delineated and properly situated within the military services and the Department? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. Yes, in my view the responsibilities for I.O. are properly situated. If confirmed, I will work with those in the Department to consider ways to improve our effectiveness in this area.

Question. Do you believe the Department has a mature strategic concept for such efforts? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. Yes, I understand that the Strategy for Operations in the Information Environment (SOIE) was signed by Secretary Austin in July 2023. This strategy provides the framework for future efforts to enhance; people & organizations; programs; policies & governance; and partnerships. I understand the Department is developing an in-depth and agile SOIE implementation plan to actualize the strategy and further the Department's efforts to implement the National Defense Strategy.

Question. Are DOD's efforts in this regard appropriately integrated with other U.S. Government organizations and activities? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. The Department's efforts in the information environment work best when synchronized across other US agencies and their activities. If confirmed, I would make it a priority for DOD to ensure operations are integrated and deconflicted.

Question. What is your assessment of the metrics used to assess effectiveness of DOD information operations? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. I understand that DOD continues to improve oversight and evaluation of our operations in the information environment. The Department is working to better understand the effects of Information Operations and the metrics used to evaluate their performance. Some operations provide immediate results while others require a sustained effort over time to reach military objectives in line with national security goals. DOD employs tools such as surveys, focus groups, and face to face interactions to gather quantitative and qualitative metrics required to assess operational effectiveness.

Question. Does DOD have sufficient authorities and resources to conduct these operations effectively? If not, what additional authorities and resources would you request, if confirmed? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. I understand DOD currently has sufficient authorities to conduct Information Operations but that there may be some limitations. If confirmed, I will work to understand the nuances of those authorities and identify any limitations.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ROLE IN ELECTION SECURITY

Question. In September 2019, at the annual National Cybersecurity Summit, then Secretary of Defense Esper noted that "our adversaries will continue to target our democratic processes", the Pentagon had "developed our capabilities and increased our capacity to allow us to detect, locate, and exploit threats in the cyber domain", and that "influence operations are at a scope and scale never before imagined." In that same speech, Secretary Esper declared election security "an enduring mission for the Department of Defense."

What do you see as the Department's continued role in election security? (OPR: Space)

Answer. I understand the Department supports the whole-of-government effort to secure and defend US. Elections. This is a no fail mission and I will continue to support the Department's critical role in protecting and defending the Nation.

Question. Do you agree that there is a continuing threat to our democratic processes from foreign malign influence operations? (OPR: Space, OCR: SOLIC)

Answer. Yes. I believe our adversaries have the intent and, in some instances, the capability to conduct malign influence efforts against the United States that aim to manipulate and undermine confidence in U.S. elections. There is a low barrier for entry for adversaries to conduct Information Operations. The United States will likely see continued and increasingly sophisticated adversarial threats to our democratic processes as technology matures.

Question. Do you envision election security as an enduring mission for the Department? If so, how would OUSD(P) best support the mission of defending our democratic processes from interference by Russia and other foreign adversaries? (OPR: Space)

Answer. I understand election security is an enduring mission for DOD. If confirmed, I will work with internal and interagency stakeholders to ensure our elections are free from foreign interference or influence.

Question. Do you assess that DOD actions to date are supporting a whole of government approach to foreign adversaries that seek to interfere in our elections? If not, are there additional policy steps that you believe the Department of Defense should take to enhance deterrence of foreign election interference? How would the actions you list, if any, support whole of government efforts? (OPR: Space)

Answer. I understand DOD supports whole-of-government efforts to secure and defend US. Elections. If confirmed, I will work to ensure DOD's support enhances these whole-of-government efforts and deters foreign election interference.

DEFENSE SECURITY COOPERATION

Question. In your view, what should be the role of the Department's security cooperation activities in the implementation of U.S. security strategy? (Review: SPC)

Answer. The role of the Department's security cooperation activities is to deliver effective, timely, and sustainable solutions to improve the military effectiveness of our allies and partners in support of strategic interests. DOD security cooperation prioritizes developing ally and partner capabilities to create warfighting advantages, enhance integrated deterrence, and enable partners to act alongside or in lieu of U.S. Forces.

For example, I understand the Department is implementing organizational improvements, coordinating with allies and partners and industry, and using lessons learned from the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Tiger Team, and its permanent body, the FMS Continuous Process Improvement Board, to ensure that the United States can rapidly support our Allies and Partners with the capabilities they need to buy down risk through the FMS process.

If confirmed, I am committed to working with Congress and ensuring the Department's security cooperation capabilities are delivered rapidly to our allies and partners and achieve our own strategic objectives.

Question. If confirmed, how would you define the fundamental objectives of the Department's programs and activities for building the capabilities of foreign security forces? What changes, if any, would you recommend to the Department's approach? (Review: SPC)

Answer. Delivering state-of-the-art capabilities at speed and scale is critical to secure our enduring military advantage. We must provide capabilities to our allies and partners as quickly as possible in support of their requirements, as well as our own National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I am committed to working with DOD components, the State Department, and Congress to continue to address delays and improve the FMS process.

Question. Is the OUSD(P) appropriately organized and empowered to fulfill its responsibilities for the oversight of strategic policy and guidance and the overall allocation of resources for security cooperation programs and activities of the Department of Defense pursuant to section 382 of title 10, United States Code? What changes, if any, to OUSD(P) structure, authorities, and resourcing for these purposes, would you recommend, if confirmed? (OPR: SPC)

Answer. I understand that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy exercises responsibility for oversight of strategic policy and guidance and is responsible for overall resource prioritization and allocation for security cooperation programs and activities of the Department of Defense.

If confirmed, I will review and evaluate the organization, authorities, and overall resourcing for the Department's security cooperation programs and activities in alignment with the National Defense Strategy, and will provide my recommendations to Congress.

Question. In your view, what should be the role of the Department of Defense, vis-&-vis the Department of State and other civilian departments and agencies, in efforts to build the capabilities of foreign security forces? What is your assessment of the current level of coordination between the Department of Defense and Department of State on security cooperation? (OPR: SPC)

Answer. I view the Department of Defense and the Department of State as partners in strengthening our ability to work with allies and partners to meet shared security objectives, as articulated in the National Security and National Defense Strategies. DOD security cooperation prioritizes developing ally and partner capabilities to create warfighting advantages, enhance integrated deterrence, and enable partners to act alongside or in lieu of U.S. Forces.

Institutional capacity building efforts are integral to successful security cooperation. I view the Department of Defense and State's efforts to build transparent, effective, and accountable security institutions and forces as both complementary and necessary for enhancing military effectiveness and building sustainable partnerships.

There is a strong, collaborative relationship between DOD and State on issues such as building the capabilities of foreign security forces. If confirmed, I will further assess the level of coordination between the Department of Defense and the Department of State and provide my recommendations to the Secretary of Defense.

Question. If confirmed, what would be your relationship with the Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA)? On what issues would you expect to consult with the Director? (OPR: SPC)

Answer. I understand that the Director of DSCA reports to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy through the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities. If confirmed, I expect to consult with the Director of DSCA on the execution of DOD and State-led security cooperation and security assistance programs.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

Question. In August 2022 the Secretary of Defense issued the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP), which included a detailed set of objectives and initiatives to "improve its approach to mitigating and responding to civilian harm, protecting U.S. national security, and confronting the complex challenges of the modern security environment."

What is your assessment of the progress made to implement the CHMR-AP to date? What areas do you believe require greater attention or resources to achieve the desired outcomes? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. The CHMR-AP is a priority of Secretary Austin, and it will improve DOD's approach to mitigating and responding to civilian harm. The CHMR-AP creates a range of new processes and institutions dedicated to cultivating best practices on civilian protection and learning from previous instances of civilian harm. I understand DOD is in the process of implementing the range of actions directed in the CHMR-AP, including the hiring key personnel, although full implementation will take time. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to implement fully this important action plan.

Question. What role do you believe public transparency plays with respect to accounting for and responding to allegations of civilian casualties resulting from U.S. military operations? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. Transparency is important for multiple reasons, and it is critical to both public accountability and responding appropriately to civilian harm when it occurs. My understanding is that the CHMR-AP will facilitate both transparency and accountability through a range of actions, including the enhancement of assessments and investigations of civilian harm.

Question. Do you believe the Department of Defense has achieved a sufficient level of transparency on such matters? If not, what additional steps do you believe are necessary? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. The extensive efforts undertaken by DOD over the past year to implement the CHMR-AP demonstrate a strong commitment to improve the processes in this area. Strengthening transparency requires systemic improvements. For instance, in addition to the enhancement of assessments and investigations of civilian harm directed by the CHMR-AP, the action plan also directs the creation of standardized civilian harm operational reporting and data management processes to improve how DOD collects, shares, and learns from data related to civilian harm. It is vital that these implementation efforts continue. If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress and DOD components across the force to ensure these aspects of the

CHMR-AP are implemented so that our military operations are both more effective and transparent.

USE OF MILITARY FORCE

Question. Are you satisfied that current legal authorities, including the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF), enable the Department to carry out counterterrorism operations and activities at a necessary and appropriate level? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. I believe the current authorities are sufficient for DOD's counterterrorism operations. I know that the President has said he is open to working with Congress on a narrow and specific framework to repeal and replace the current AUMF, if that is Congress' priority.

If confirmed, I would ensure Policy would work with Congress on any legislative proposals regarding this topic toward a mutually acceptable change in the law.

Question. The Senate voted to repeal the 2002 AUMF in March of this year. Do you support the repeal of the 2002 AUMF? Please explain your answer. (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. If confirmed, I would review any ongoing operations to determine if they rely on the 2002 AUMF. However, if none rely on the 2002 AUMF, I am not opposed to repealing it.

Question. In your view, is a "new" authorization for the use of military force needed at this time? If so, what should be the scope and terms of this "new" AUMF? Please explain your answer. (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. I support the executive branch and Congress working together to develop a new AUMF that better reflects the reality of the ever-evolving threat that terrorists pose.

If confirmed, I will work with Congress to develop a narrow and specific framework that ensures the continuity of current operations and allows the flexibility to identify new terrorist groups or account for name changes or splits of previously identified terrorist groups.

Question. What groups are currently assessed to be associated forces of al Qaeda for purposes of the 2001 AUMF, and in what countries are United States Military direct action operations against such groups authorized? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. As cited in previous reports to Congress, including with the so-called "Section 1264" reports, the current covered groups are al Qaeda, the Taliban, certain other terrorist or insurgent groups affiliated with al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), al-Shabaab, al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al Qaeda in Syria, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). There are also some groups that remain classified due to the sensitivity of the collection sources that provided us this information.

The United States used force in 2022 in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Somalia, according to this report.

Question. What factors would you consider, if confirmed, in recommending to the Secretary of Defense which forces of other nations should be eligible for collective self-defense by United States Military forces, and under what conditions? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. It is important to note that defending allies and partners when they participate in combat operations alongside United States Forces is a foundational element that trust is built upon. Collective self-defense is mutual in these partnerships, and our allies and partners have historically come to the aid of United States Forces whose lives are in danger. We would not want to jeopardize this inherent trust when lives are at stake.

I understand that DOD has an obligation to report to Congress when it designates a force as eligible for collective self-defense.

If confirmed, I will advise the Secretary on the planning and development of rules of engagement and guidance for commanders to request and approve allied and partner forces that participate in combat operations alongside our forces.

DETAINEE ISSUES

Question. Do you support the standards for detainee treatment specified in the revised Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued September 2006, and in DOD Directive 2310.01E, *The Department of Defense Detainee Program*, dated March 15, 2022? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. Yes, I support the standards for detainee treatment in the Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued in September 2006, and in DOD Directive 2310.01E, DOD Detainee Program, dated August 19, 2014.

Question. What are your views on the long-term use of the detention facility at Guantanamo? Should use of the facility be terminated, as President Biden has indicated? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. I support the Administration's stated view that the detention facility at Guantanamo should be closed. Until that time, however, the Department must ensure the continued safe, humane, and legal care and treatment of the 30 remaining detainees through Joint Task Force—Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO).

Question. If the use of the facility should be terminated, what are the available options for disposition of the detainees held at Guantanamo and where should the remaining detainees in law of war detention at GTMO be detained? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. It would be premature for me to speculate. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the Administration and Congress to ensure the continued safe, humane, and legal care and treatment of the 30 remaining detainees through Joint Task Force—Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO).

Question. If the use of the facility should be terminated, what process would you expect to follow to bring detainee operations at GTMO to a close? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. It would be premature for me to speculate. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the Administration and Congress to ensure the continued safe, humane, and legal care and treatment of the 30 remaining detainees through Joint Task Force—Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO).

Question. If confirmed, would you ever advise the President to transfer new detainees to Guantanamo, and if so, under what criteria? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. It is my understanding that the Biden-Harris Administration does not intend to bring new detainees to Guantanamo.

Question. What are your views on the objectives and outcomes of the Department's Military Commission process? (Review: SOLIC)

Answer. In my view, the Military Commissions process provides appropriate standards and processes for these trials.

If confirmed, to the extent possible, I will work with the Office of Military Commissions to ensure that Policy is not an impediment to the thorough and speedy adjudication deserved by the families of the victims of the 9/11 attacks and other terrorist attacks.

Question. For as long as detainees are held at Guantanamo, the Department of Defense will have an ongoing obligation to meet the detainees' healthcare needs. Some of the detainees are approaching advanced age, and others have serious health conditions.

In your view, is the Department adequately addressing the healthcare needs of GTMO detainees? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. The health and well-being of the detainees at Guantanamo are an important part of the mission of JTF-GTMO. Accordingly, United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), through JTF-GTMO, provides adequate and humane care for the detainees at Guantanamo that complies with United States law and policy.

Question. What recommendations would you make to ensure the Department can continue to meet its healthcare obligations for as long as detainees are held at GTMO? (OPR: SOLIC)

Answer. As the detainee population ages and detainees experience chronic medical conditions, it will remain Department policy to protect the life and health of detainees by humane and appropriate clinical means, and in accordance with all applicable law and DOD policy.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Question. In responding to the 2018 DOD Civilian Employee Workplace and Gender Relations survey, approximately 17.7 percent of female and 5.8 percent of male DOD employees indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment and/or gender discrimination by "someone at work" in the 12 months prior to completing the survey.

If confirmed, what actions would you take were you to receive or otherwise become aware of a complaint of sexual harassment or discrimination from an employee of the OUSD(P)?

Answer. Sexual harassment has no place in the work place. Employees deserve a safe and respectful work environment. If confirmed, I would work with subject matter experts and/or Anti-Harassment Program Managers to appropriately address the complaint in a manner that respects the privacy and well-being of the complainant and ensures appropriate accountability.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

Question. In order to exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive timely testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ANGUS S. KING, JR.

ARCTIC

1. Senator KING. Mr. Chollet, Russia and China continue to rapidly militarize the Arctic, yet I have seen little response from the Department of Defense (DOD). What is your plan to execute the Arctic Strategy and ensure a stronger DOD presence, to include scalable and expeditionary basing options, and to integrate and interoperate with our partners and allies to increase our Arctic posture?

Mr. CHOLLET. I understand that DOD is closely monitoring Russia's buildup of its Arctic military capabilities, as well as the growing cooperation between Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the region. DOD coordinated closely with the White House on developing an implementation plan for the National Strategy for the Arctic Region (NSAR), which includes concrete steps DOD will take to achieve the NSAR's objectives.

This includes enhancing DOD's domain awareness capabilities in the Arctic region through upgrades to current capabilities and replacing outdated systems that will better enable the Joint Force to monitor Russian and PRC activity in the region. DOD is also deepening collaboration with Canada in this area in the context of

NORAD modernization and demonstrating more regular presence in the region by exercising alongside our allies and partners to improve interoperability (e.g., Exercise Arctic Challenge in Europe and Exercise ARCTIC EDGE in North America). With respect to posture, the Department of Defense continues to assess the potential requirements for scalable, expeditionary basing options. However, I believe that DOD's existing infrastructure, combined with access, basing and overflight agreements, are sufficient to meet today's national security requirements. If confirmed, I commit to regularly reviewing DOD's posture needs in the Arctic and keeping the committee apprised.

CHINA COMMISSION

2. Senator KING. Mr. Chollet, I believe we must establish an unbiased and non-partisan commission to examine a grand strategy for our approach to China, similar in intent to President Eisenhower's Solarium Project. We need to think of a holistic approach to create a stable international order in which China (or Russia) cannot dictate regional developments. In order to avoid the United States trying to "spend our way out of conflict," what are China's primary areas of influence the United States and allies should focus on countering that will provide the most?

Mr. CHOLLET. President Biden's 2022 National Security Strategy clearly states that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge we face, as the only competitor that harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit, even as the United States remains committed to managing the competition between our countries responsibly.

Likewise, the 2021 U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy recognizes that the PRC is combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological might as it pursues a sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific region and seeks to become the world's most influential power. The PRC's coercion and aggression spans the globe, but it is most acute in the Indo-Pacific region. This includes economic coercion of Australia, conflict along the Line of Actual Control with India, the growing pressure on Taiwan, and bullying of neighbors in the East and South China Seas. The PRC is also undermining human rights and international law, including freedom of navigation, as well as other principles that have brought stability and prosperity to the Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific Strategy states the United States is committed to an Indo-Pacific that is free and open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient and will work with our allies and partners as part of that commitment.

As part of this whole of government effort, I know the Department of Defense is focused on the challenges posed by the PRC. The 2022 U.S. National Defense Strategy (NDS) sets out clear strategic direction that to advance our defense and security goals, the Department needs to act urgently to sustain and strengthen deterrence, with the PRC as the pacing challenge. The NDS identifies four top-level defense priorities—to defend the U.S. homeland paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the PRC; to deter strategic attacks against the United States, our Allies, and our partners; to deter aggression, while being prepared to prevail in conflict, should deterrence fail, focusing first on the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific region, followed by the Russia challenge in Europe; and fourth, to ensure our future military advantage, the Department will build a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem. The Strategy sets out three interlocking ways in which the Department can achieve these priorities—integrated deterrence, campaigning, and actions to build enduring advantages. The NDS also makes clear that conflict with the PRC is neither inevitable nor desirable.

The Congress plays an important role in enabling implementation of these two strategies. If confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to work together to address the challenge posed by the PRC.

3. Senator KING. Mr. Chollet, what would be the greatest benefit this commission could deliver?

Mr. CHOLLET. I always welcome independent, informed outside advice and expertise on meeting our security and defense challenges, including the challenges posed by the PRC. I know the Department is already engaging closely with the Commission on the National Defense Strategy for the United States on its implementation of the 2022 NDS, which focuses the Department around the pacing challenge of the PRC. I also see benefit in any assistance that outside voices and experts can provide in increasing understanding in the Congress and among the broader public of the critical challenges our Nation is facing in this decisive decade and the actions and resources required to meet them.

4. Senator KING. Mr. Chollet, what would put us in the best position to avoid the United States and China from escalating conflict?

Mr. CHOLLET. Conflict with the People's Republic of China (PRC) is neither imminent nor inevitable. We must continue to take steps to ensure that deterrence continues to be strong today, tomorrow, and in the future by investing in our own capabilities and operational concepts, our alliances and partnerships, and our regional force posture. It is also important that we maintain open lines of communication between the United States and the PRC. I share the Department's continued belief in the importance of open lines of military-to-military communication between our two militaries in order to prevent competition from inadvertently spiraling into conflict. If confirmed, I will support the Department's efforts keep open those lines of communication, including at the senior-most levels.

5. Senator KING. Mr. Chollet, what are the 'toughest problems' outside of military imbalances?

Mr. CHOLLET. President Biden's 2022 National Security Strategy clearly states that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the greatest geopolitical challenge we face. The National Defense Strategy (NDS) identifies four top-level defense priorities—to defend the U.S. homeland posed to the threat posed by the PRC; to deter strategic attacks against the United States, our Allies, and our partners; to deter aggression, while being prepared to prevail in conflict focusing first on the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific region and then the Russia challenge in Europe; and fourth, to ensure our future military advantage, achieved by a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN III

DELAYED BUDGET AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

6. Senator MANCHIN. Mr. Chollet, I remember in 2011, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Michael Mullen, told this Committee that the national debt was the largest threat to U.S. national security. Since then, our national debt has more than doubled from \$15 trillion to \$33 trillion, and the delays for passing our defense appropriations bill have increased exponentially over the last 2 decades. Multiple sources, including retired general officers, the National Defense Industrial Association, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Pentagon itself have all recognized the damage failing to pass appropriations on time has on both our national security and the taxpayer. The American Enterprise Institute threw out a rough estimate of \$200 million per day under the latest Continuing Resolution that covered October through December 2022, that's a total of \$18 billion. Getting the Department's fiscal house in order is my highest priority on this Committee, and I would greatly appreciate a commitment from you that if you are confirmed you will pull this information together and make sure we're all informed of the consequences of putting our military in the position we're currently in yet again. Can you commit to that?

Mr. CHOLLET. The total sum of time the Department has been under a continuing resolution from 2011 to present equals 4 years' worth of delays. No amount of money can make up for that lost time, and the PRC is not waiting. You have my commitment, if confirmed, to inform Congress of the severe impacts Continuing Resolutions have on the National Defense Strategy, from critical delays in our acquisition programs to degraded infrastructure and readiness levels across the force.

CHIEF MANAGEMENT OFFICER

7. Senator MANCHIN. Mr. Chollet, continuing on the topic of fiscal responsibility in the Pentagon, I've been extremely concerned with our lack of progress in business modernization, auditing, commercial cost comparison, and independent evaluations of programs. These concerns have been validated year after year with the abolishment of the Chief Management Officer position within the Department in 2021, and most recently with the abolishment of the Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office, or CAPE, in the House National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) this year. Thankfully, my amendment to the NDAA to reinstate the Chief Management Officer was adopted in the Senate NDAA to ensure the Department has a leadership position in place whose sole duty is business modernization and fiscal responsibility. Can I have your commitment, if you're confirmed, you will work with me to ensure this position is implemented in a way that truly benefits the Department's needs for real business modernization?

Mr. CHOLLET. I agree that we must modernize our business systems and adopt best practices from across industry to ensure we remain good fiscal stewards of the American taxpayer's dollar. I am especially excited for the Performance Improvement Framework laid out by the Director for Administration and Management in their Strategic Management Plan. If confirmed, I commit to working, within my purview in Policy, across the Department to improve our capabilities, organizations, and processes to better our business and fiscal practices.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARK KELLY

SOFTWARE CENTRIC CAPABILITIES

8. Senator KELLY. Mr. Chollet, as our military capabilities become more advanced, many of our new capabilities will be software centric. Due to the constant evolution of new capabilities, some of these programs will remain almost continuously in research, development, and procurement at the same time. This means that iterative improvements will need to be baked into the acquisition plan and funded in a way that supports that continuous process. How do you think DOD should approach this challenge?

Mr. CHOLLET. In an era of rapid technological change and innovation, we must ensure that our warfighters have access to the best capabilities to achieve the outcomes of the National Defense Strategy. As software will play a major role in these capabilities, the Department will need to be able to rapidly develop, iterate, and update software to stay relevant to changing warfighter requirements and the evolving threat environment.

I understand that one way the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy is getting at these challenges is through the establishment of an office, DASD Force Development and Emerging Capabilities, focused on strategic and policy oversight of the development of capabilities that will enable the Joint Force to deter and build advantage vis-&-vis our competitors and interfacing with other DOD Components that have equities in the emerging technology space.

If confirmed, I will work closely with my colleagues in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the Military Departments to ensure that the Department has the necessary policies, authorities, and funding mechanisms to enable continuous improvements throughout the capability development process so that we can best support our warfighters.

9. Senator KELLY. Mr. Chollet, do you think existing policy can keep up with this challenge?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe that policy is one part of the solution to increase our success in incorporating iterative improvements into our warfighting capabilities. I understand that the

Department has expanded the use of innovative acquisition pathways to enable agility, continuous user engagement, and rapid delivery of products to be more responsive to changing Warfighter needs, threats, and technology. If confirmed, I will work closely with my partners from Joint Staff, in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and in the Services to ensure that the Department has the necessary policies to enable continuous improvements throughout the capability development process.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROGER F. WICKER

RELATIONSHIP WITH CONGRESS

10. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what specific steps would you take to restore trust between the Pentagon's policy office and Congress, which was damaged during Colin Kahl's tenure as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, I will treat Congress as a partner. I have a history of working on foreign policy issues in a bipartisan fashion, and I look forward to working with both sides to meet our shared national security objectives.

AUKUS

11. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, will you commit to providing the full details of the Submarine Industrial Base study conducted by the Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation within 30 days of assuming your position?

Mr. CHOLLET. I understand that the Submarine Industrial Base study conducted by the Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation and the Navy was conducted to inform the President's Fiscal Year 2025 budget, and DOD is continuing to refine funding recommendations during the program and budget review process that is underway right now. If confirmed, I look forward to getting a full briefing on the study and to ensuring the utmost transparency on the full findings once they are finalized. Getting the Submarine Industrial Base right will be a top priority for me if confirmed and will directly contribute to the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

AFGHANISTAN

12. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what was your role in the State Department's work related to the planned military withdrawal from Afghanistan?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Department of Defense planned and managed the military withdrawal from Afghanistan. As Counselor of the State Department, my involvement prior to August 15 had been focused principally on coordinating with allies and partners and negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation and the Taliban—efforts led by former Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Ambassador Khalilzad, and overall policy questions. I was aware of the Department of State's work in Afghanistan in other areas but did not direct any of it.

13. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what was your role in the State Department's work related to the August 2021 emergency evacuation from Afghanistan?

Mr. CHOLLET. As I stated in my confirmation hearing, the evacuation of Afghanistan was an all-hands-on-deck exercise, and I did whatever I could to try to solve problems, which included working mainly with our allies and partners as we were coordinating this multinational effort of the evacuation. As a general advisor, I did not direct any part of the evacuation.

14. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, who were the principal State Department officials with whom you worked on matters related to Afghanistan throughout 2021?

Mr. CHOLLET. In addition to the Secretary, the Deputy Secretaries, the Under Secretary for Management and other seventh-floor principals, I was in frequent contact with Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and his team.

15. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, who were the main executive branch officials outside the State Department whom you worked on matters related to Afghanistan throughout 2021?

Mr. CHOLLET. I maintained contact with counterparts in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, intelligence community agencies, and National Security Council staff.

16. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, which 7th floor senior officials at the State Department had significant involvement in work related to the planned military withdrawal from Afghanistan, and what were their roles?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Department of Defense planned and managed the military withdrawal from Afghanistan. The State Department's role focused on implications for our diplomatic presence and was led on the 7th floor by the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources and the Under Secretary for Management.

17. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, which 7th floor senior officials at the State Department had significant involvement in the August 2021 emergency evacuation, and what were their roles?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources took the lead on the 7th floor in managing the drawdown of the Embassy and the relocation of Afghan partners. It was a team effort, however, with some leaders, including Ambassador Bass, deploying to Kabul and others working around the clock in Washington. As Counselor of the State Department, my involvement prior to August 15 had been focused principally on coordinating with allies and partners and on negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation and the Taliban—efforts led by former Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Ambassador Khalilzad, and general, policy issues.

18. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, please list all State Department meetings related to Afghanistan that you participated in between January 20, 2021 and September 30, 2021, including the meeting date and subject.

Mr. CHOLLET. While I participated in a range of interagency meetings related to Afghanistan during the period in question, I would refer you to the White House which controls the records for such interagency meetings.

19. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, please list all interagency meetings related to Afghanistan that you participated in between January 20, 2021 and September 30, 2021, including the meeting date and subject.

Mr. CHOLLET. I am unable to provide the list of these meetings in an unclassified setting. I can confirm that I participated in a range of interagency and State Department meetings related to Afghanistan during the period in question.

20. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, there is broad concern within the Congress about the lack of accountability for the Biden administration's poor planning for the Afghanistan withdrawal. To what extent do you accept responsibility?

Mr. CHOLLET. Every member of any Administration must accept responsibility for their actions in office—and ultimately, the American people will ensure accountability for any Presidential decisions. As I have publicly stated many times, and as someone who has written several books of diplomatic history, I believe we as a government must be committed to examining the record thoroughly and taking a hard look at everything we've done related to Afghanistan—from day one through the present—and to draw lessons from it so future generations can learn from our experiences. Given the scope and scale of our country's sacrifices in Afghanistan—with over 2,400 brave servicemembers killed, 20,000 injured and \$2 trillion in taxpayer dollars spent—I believe the American people deserve an accounting that is dispassionate, objective, and based on the facts, not partisanship.

Our country's military, diplomatic, and development efforts in Afghanistan—which over 20 years involved the decisions of four Presidents, two Democrat and two Republican—must be examined fully. That includes not just the end of this conflict in August 2021, but how we got there: from President Bush's decision to redirect American resources from Afghanistan to Iraq in 2003, to President Obama's decision to surge American troops into Afghanistan in 2009, to President Trump's decisions to sign the Doha Agreement establishing a May 2021 timeline for withdrawal and to significantly reduce the U.S. force presence during the U.S. Presidential transition in late 2020. This is why I fully and enthusiastically support Congress' initiative to establish the Afghan War Commission, and if confirmed, I commit to ensuring the Defense Department does whatever is necessary to cooperate fully with the Commission's essential work.

Concerning the first 6 months of the Biden administration, Secretary Blinken has insisted that the State Department hold itself accountable by asking the difficult questions and taking a hard look at its performance. The independent After Action Review conducted by the State Department—which was released publicly in its unclassified format and made available to congressional committees in its classified format—is one of several steps the State Department has taken to hold itself publicly accountable and learn these critical lessons. Moreover, current and former senior State Department officials, including me, are voluntarily participating in congressional efforts to better understand what happened in the last days of the U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan.

21. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what do you believe you might have done or recommended differently?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe there are several areas where things could have been handled differently. For example, there should have been better planning for worst-case scenarios, such as the sudden collapse of the Afghan Government; the State Department should have had stronger crisis management capabilities, which it has sought to develop during the past 2 years and has applied to recent crises; there should have been a “red team” capability; and there should have been stronger crisis communications; and there should have been a better process for senior officials to hear a broad range of views including those challenging underlying assumptions or policy decisions.

The State Department's After Action Review outlined a list of specific recommendations to strengthen the Department's crisis preparedness and response capabilities as well as offered a large number of lessons learned to apply in any future crises. The Department has since applied many of these lessons in places where there has been government instability and conflict—most recently in Sudan, Ethiopia, Ukraine, and Niger. Today, these lessons involving crisis response and task

force management to facilitate the departure of U.S. citizens is informing our efforts operating a 24/7 coordinating group to field requests for assistance from U.S. citizens in Israel and Gaza. Niger.

22. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, prior to the August 2021 withdrawal, did you receive any assessment from the Intelligence Community regarding the viability of a U.S. Embassy presence in Kabul if the United States withdrew all its troops from Afghanistan? If so, when and what did the assessment indicate?

Mr. CHOLLET. Throughout 2021, the Department of State constantly assessed the staying power of Afghan government forces and considered multiple scenarios. As senior officials have testified on multiple occasions, even the most pessimistic assessments did not predict that government forces in Kabul would collapse as quickly as they did. The expectation was that Kabul was well defended and would hold for enough time to enable a continuation of efforts to broker a peaceful political settlement.

23. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, at what point did you realize that the United States would not be able to sustain an embassy in Afghanistan without U.S. Forces?

Mr. CHOLLET. The non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) was announced as Taliban forces were on the outskirts of Kabul.

24. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what, if anything, did you recommend to Secretary of State Antony Blinken or State Department's interagency partners if and when you realized this?

Mr. CHOLLET. It was not definitively clear that an Embassy presence could not be sustained until Taliban forces were on the outskirts of Kabul. Until then, there was a consensus among State Department leaders to continue to support discussions regarding a negotiated political settlement between leaders of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban. With the collapse of the Republic, focus shifted to executing a rapid and safe evacuation of U.S. citizens and Afghan and Allied partners, working closely with our DOD colleagues.

25. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in light of the poor State Department planning that preceded the withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the 13 servicemembers who were killed during the withdrawal, what would you say to reassure our servicemembers that you have learned from your mistakes?

Mr. CHOLLET. I am proud of the courage and dedication of the civilians and uniformed service members who answered the call and executed the evacuation at great personal risk. We are committed to learning the lessons from the war in Afghanistan, including the evacuation. I would tell servicemembers that we are heartbroken for those who lost their lives or were injured in that self-sacrificing effort.

26. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, how many individuals with known or suspected ties to terrorists that were later flagged by DOD, did the State Department evacuate from Afghanistan?

Mr. CHOLLET. While these issues did not fall within my duties as Counselor of the Department of State, I have been informed that the February 15, 2022, Department of Defense Inspector General (IG) report, "Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan," notes that as of November 2, 2021, the U.S. Army's National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC) identified 50 Afghans evacuated on DOD flights during the 2-week period of the noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) in August 2021 who were in the United States with information in DOD records that would indicate "potentially significant security concerns." I am told DOD responded and took steps to implement both of the IG's recommendations, including by updating the National Ground Intelligence Center's (NGIC) data-sharing agreement with the Department of Homeland Security and implementing procedures for sharing derogatory information on Afghan evacuees with DOD and interagency stakeholders. If confirmed, I will ensure rigorous screening and vetting processes remain in place to safeguard the Homeland as we continue the important effort to relocate our former Afghan allies through the Enduring Welcome program.

27. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, are any of them still in the United States, to the best of your knowledge?

Mr. CHOLLET. These issues did not fall within my duties as Counselor of the Department of State. However, based on information provided to me from other departments and agencies, to the best of my knowledge, the answer is yes. From what DOD has shared with me, for the 50 individuals that were initially flagged as being of concern, my understanding is that NGIC subsequently worked with Department

of Homeland Security, the FBI and other agencies to further assess a wider range of information held by other agencies, not just DOD, which mitigated the concern about some of these individuals. I understand our law enforcement organizations have taken appropriate action to minimize any risks that may remain from a small number of Afghan evacuees in the United States. The vast majority of the approximately 65,000 Afghans who were evacuated during the NEO and eventually resettled in the United States present no security concerns.

28. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, you have cited as a success the fact that over 120,000 individuals were evacuated from Afghanistan during the August 14–31, 2021 U.S. withdrawal. Given the large number of people whom the U.S. evacuated, why were thousands of U.S. citizens and Afghan left partners behind?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Department of State is thankful for the considerable work done by our personnel and interagency colleagues in evacuating and relocating 120,000 individuals. The Department of State coordinated and facilitated support for U.S. citizens who requested to leave Afghanistan, and they were given the utmost priority. The Administration and the Department of State continue all efforts to support any U.S. citizens and eligible Afghans who wish to leave Afghanistan.

29. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, at any point during the chaotic U.S. evacuation from Afghanistan, did you express concern that the United States was evacuating many thousands of people from Afghanistan who were not former partners eligible for Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) or priority status, and whom the U.S. Government had been unable to vet properly? Why or why not?

Mr. CHOLLET. Since this vetting process was not part of my responsibilities as Counselor of the Department of State, I do not recall raising such concerns. However, I do know that prioritizing SIVs and properly vetting evacuees was a high priority. At the outset of the Administration, the State Department quickly worked to address the backlog of 17,000 SIV applicants that it inherited. Within 2 weeks of taking office of January 2021, the Secretary restarted the SIV interview process in Kabul that had been inactive since January 2020. This proved essential when the deadline to withdraw troops arrived, and especially after the Afghan government unexpectedly collapsed and the Administration set to the unprecedented task of safely evacuating 124,000 people. Further supporting the U.S. government's ability to address the high numbers of evacuations was a global effort coordinated closely with our allies and partners as evacuees found safe harbor not only in the United States but with our partners overseas. Ensuring adequate vetting was central to our approach to putting in place "lily pads" in UAE, Qatar, Kosovo and elsewhere to allow for proper screening before evacuees entered the United States.

30. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, on August 27, 2021, according to public reports, the State Department distributed an internal document highlighting multiple incidents at intake centers where there were credible suspicions of sexual abuse, including situations in which much older Afghan men presented young girls to authorities as their "wives". The document noted that the State Department had urgently requested guidance about how to respond to such allegations but had failed to receive guidance on how to handle these situations. According to other public reports, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) subsequently concluded that the situation was driven by the "desperation" of families to get children out of Afghanistan. On September 14, 2021, Secretary of State Blinken confirmed to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that there had been "a limited number of cases where we have separated people because we were concerned". How many cases were there in which people were separated?

Mr. CHOLLET. Since this issue was not part of my responsibilities as Counselor of the Department of State, I am not familiar with this reported internal document and do not know precisely how many such cases existed. However, from additional details the State Department's CARE team has offered me, I have been told that staff supporting this effort applied U.S. marriage and other applicable laws in reviewing cases where there was suspicion of sexual exploitation or abuse of minors, including applying U.S. laws prohibiting underage marriage and informing social services and law enforcement if abuse or exploitation were detected. Signage with translation was posted throughout centers informing those arriving from Afghanistan of their rights and experienced staff were assigned to speak with individuals who showed signs they may have been the victims of abuse.

In some cases, the Department of State was the lead agency responsible for implementing these protections, though this task more frequently fell to the Department of Homeland Security, particularly as our relocation effort continued through the fall of 2021. The wide range of departments and agencies involved in the relocation

effort, as well as the individual approach taken to specific situations, and because separation often occurred for a variety of reasons, means there is not a recorded number that accurately captures the instances where individuals were separated explicitly for this concern.

More broadly, I know the State Department takes preventing and responding to sexual abuse seriously, as outlined the 2023 “U.S. National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence,” the first U.S. governmentwide plan to prevent and address sexual violence, and related plans focused on this important topic. As the 2022 “U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally” emphasized, the United States believes preventing and responding to gender-based violence around the world is a matter of human rights, and our commitment to this issue remains steadfast, even as we address a problem we know remains all too common around the world.

31. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, were you aware that such cases were occurring?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Department prioritizes the safety of all evacuees and is grateful for the work of our Diplomatic Security colleagues, as well as our interagency colleagues in the Departments of Homeland Security and Defense in this regard. While I and the Department of State take allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse seriously, this issue is not within my duties as Counselor and my performance of those duties did not touch upon this matter.

32. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what actions did you take regarding these incidents?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Department prioritizes the safety of all evacuees and is thankful for the work of our Diplomatic Security colleagues, as well as our interagency colleagues in the Departments of Homeland Security and Defense in this regard. While I and the Department of State take allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse seriously, this issue is not within my duties as Counselor and my performance of those duties did not touch upon this matter.

SOUTHWEST BORDER SECURITY

33. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, despite significant differences between Presidents Trump and Biden on border security, President Biden has maintained the southwest border deployment that President Trump initiated. If confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, would you recommend that the southwest border deployment continue? Why or why not?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has requested DOD support to carry out its border security mission at the southern land border for most of the last 23 years. If confirmed, I would recommend that DOD continue to support DHS requests, to the extent legal, feasible, and appropriate. In addition, if confirmed, I would also recommend that DOD continue to work closely with DHS to close the gaps in DHS capabilities and capacity to carry out its border security mission.

34. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what role do you believe that DOD should play in bolstering security along our southwest border?

Mr. CHOLLET. DOD’s role is a supporting role. In the absence of foreign military forces and actions, border security is a law enforcement matter assigned by law to DHS. When DHS capabilities and/or capacity are insufficient to meet DHS’s border security mission, DHS may, consistent with the law, request DOD assistance. DOD evaluates six factors when considering a request for assistance: (1) legality; (2) lethality; (3) risk; (4) cost; (5) appropriateness; and (6) readiness. If the Secretary of Defense, or a delegate, approves the request for assistance, DOD determines the appropriate capabilities, resources, and forces necessary to provide the requested assistance. DOD personnel providing DOD assistance remain under DOD command and control at all times.

35. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, according to a recent Department of Homeland Security report, which was reported by Politico, illegal drugs produced in Mexico remains the deadliest threat to Americans, killing more people nationwide than foreign or domestic terrorists. Do you believe that the Department of Defense is doing enough to counter fentanyl? If not, what would you recommend that the Department do differently to counter the cartels’ fentanyl trafficking?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe the Department is appropriately focused on supporting DOD’s interagency and international law enforcement partners in their efforts to

counter fentanyl, in accordance with the authorities and funding provided by Congress.

The top priority of DOD's counterdrug program is to "Disrupt and degrade the flow of heroin, fentanyl, and amphetamine-type like stimulants, chiefly from Mexico, by fusing intelligence and disrupting links among drug trafficking and transnational criminal organizations, with a focus on the Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) networks."

DOD's counterdrug program, with a Fiscal Year 2023 budget of \$855M of which 59 percent is dedicated to efforts in the Western Hemisphere, executes this priority goal by supporting other Departments' and Agencies' efforts to investigate and interdict, arrest, seize, and sanction CJNG and Sinaloa members and facilitators, precursor chemicals, pill presses, die molds, containers, money laundering, and weapons trafficking. DOD intelligence analysis is used to identify key connections across the fentanyl precursor supply chain, illuminate key players (cartel leaders, money launderers, chemists, brokers, chemical companies), identify shell companies and associated financial accounts, and provide new investigative leads for partner agencies.

If confirmed, I will review the Department's efforts, assess the Department's support, and identify any opportunities to improve the Department's support.

36. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what role should DOD play in the effort to counter Mexico's criminal cartels?

Mr. CHOLLET. DOD should continue support to its U.S. law enforcement partners as part of a governmentwide effort to disrupt these cartels, in accordance with the counterdrug authorities provided by Congress. DOD's intelligence collection, analysis, and reporting is used to enable and assist DOD's U.S. Government partners in disrupting and degrading these networks, not just in Mexico but wherever they operate globally.

37. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in your opinion, what special capabilities does DOD bring to that effort?

Mr. CHOLLET. DOD brings skill sets that are not typically found with interagency partners. DOD's global footprint and corresponding intelligence collection, analytic, and linguistic capabilities, as well as DOD's experience in identifying, mapping, and planning to disrupt networks, are the primary tools DOD brings to this effort. If confirmed, I look forward to assessing the breadth of DOD support to the mission.

38. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in February, the Senate Armed Services Committee learned that DOD was paying \$130,000 per day to store unused border construction materials, rather than using those materials to fix or extend the southwest border. This means that tens of millions of dollars were spent to do literally nothing—all while our border remained woefully insecure. Despite multiple inquiries from the Republican members on this Committee, as well as legislation—the FINISH IT Act—that was adopted on a bipartisan basis in both the House and Senate NDAA bills, we learned last month that DOD is auctioning off the materials at cut rates, rather than using them to secure our border. While we are still awaiting a fuller accounting from DOD, we learned, for example, that \$4.4 million worth of border wall construction materials was auctioned off for a mere \$156,000—roughly 4 cents on the dollar. Would you agree that paying to store border wall construction materials rather than using those materials to fix or extend the southwest border wall, is an example of Government waste? Why or why not?

Mr. CHOLLET. Having not worked on this issue in my capacity at the State Department and given the limited context provided in the question, I would need more background information before providing the full response you deserve. But in formulating my response, here are just some of the questions that I would ask:

- 1) What did the law require? How do the actions align with the Administration's policy goals?
- 2) Could the construction materials be used by another government agency?
- 3) Were there alternative and more effective means available to secure the border?
- 4) How much would it cost to use these materials to erect a border barrier and do funds need to be appropriated for that purpose?
- 5) What was in the best interest of national security? The American taxpayer?

If confirmed, and if asked to provide information on this subject to Congress, I would want to seek answers to these questions to be fully informed in order to provide complete and accurate answers to your important questions. Furthermore, I understand that the House and Senate have adopted provisions regarding excess border wall construction materials in their respective versions of the Fiscal Year 2024

National Defense Authorization Act. Should either provision be enacted, I commit to ensuring that the Department will act in accordance with the law if I am confirmed.

More generally, if confirmed, I will work to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse within the programs under my purview, and I commit to cooperating with any efforts by the Department of Defense Inspector General, the Government Accountability Office, and relevant congressional oversight committees should they conduct reviews of such matters.

39. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, irrespective of your views on the role that the Department of Defense should specifically play on the border, do you believe that a physical barrier along the southwest border should be one component of a broader border security strategy?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes, in my opinion a physical barrier along the relevant areas of the southwest border should continue to be one component of a broader border security strategy. More broadly, border security is a law enforcement responsibility assigned by Congress to DHS. I defer to DHS to address the role a physical barrier might play in DHS's broader border security strategy. If confirmed, I will have the opportunity to work with relevant DOD Components and DHS to assess whether physical barriers affect DHS requests for DOD support.

40. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, to what extent do you consider southwest border security pertinent to overall Homeland defense?

Mr. CHOLLET. Homeland defense is the defense of the United States from external military threats or aggression. To the extent that DHS efforts to secure the southwest border also counter, or contribute to countering, external military threats or aggression, such efforts would be pertinent and complementary.

41. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, do you commit to visiting the southwest border within your first 30 days on the job, and reporting back to the Committee on your observations?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to visit DOD personnel deployed to support DHS at the southwest border as soon as possible and share my observations with the Committee.

SYRIA

42. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, you defended President Obama's decision not to enforce his own "red line" regarding the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons in 2013. You wrote in an excerpt of your book that Politico published, "Judged by what the red line was originally intended to do—address the massive threat from Syria's chemical weapons—it was a success. In fact, it has been perhaps the only positive development related to the Syria crisis." However, we now know that Assad never relinquished his chemical weapons—in fact he used them against civilians on at least two other occasions. Do you still consider President Obama's decision a success? Why or why not?

Mr. CHOLLET. As a result of Syria's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the adoption of Security Council Resolution 2118, over 1,300 tons of chemical warfare agent were verifiably destroyed, and Syria was required to dismantle thousands of strategic munitions and over 20 sites involved in its chemical weapons program. The Biden Administration has made clear it will continue to press for the complete verified destruction of Syria's chemical weapons and production facilities, and maintain pressure on the Assad regime, including through the mechanisms provided for under the CWC and UNSCR 2118.

43. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in retrospect, do you believe that President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry were mistaken in trusting that Russia would be a credible partner in removing chemical weapons from Syria? Why or why not?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Russian Federation has proven it cannot be a credible partner in this effort. Russia was and remains influential with the Assad regime on issues related to Syrian chemical weapons. Unfortunately, Russia tries to impede and continues to block, when possible, international efforts, including at the U.N. Security Council, to hold the Assad regime accountable for repeated usage of chemical weapons. The United States also assesses that Russia helped the Assad regime cover up the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people, including in Douma in 2018.

44. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, during his confirmation hearing in January 2021, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the Biden administration would return to compliance with the 2015 Iran deal if Iran did the same, and then “use that as a platform with our allies and partners who would once again be on the same side with us to seek a longer and stronger agreement”¹. A “longer and stronger” deal would have theoretically addressed the broader spectrum of U.S. concerns regarding Iran, to include its support for terrorism and its missile program, and also eliminated the sunset clauses. But under Iran envoy Robert Malley, there was no apparent effort toward a “longer and stronger” deal. Meanwhile, Iran has made significant progress toward a nuclear weapons capability. In February 2023, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl testified that Iran could produce enough fissile material for a bomb in “about 12 days”. Looking back on the administration’s approach, what would you have done differently?

Mr. CHOLLET. President Biden has made clear this Administration will continue to utilize all available means at its disposal to ensure Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon, constrain Iran’s support to militias and terrorist groups, and counter its missile and UAV programs. I believe the Administration’s effort to reunite our allies to seek a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear threat was the right one. That included using the considerable leverage we inherited, as well as developing additional leverage in the form of new sanctions, to force Iran back to the negotiating table. Regrettably, last year Iran walked away from a deal supported by all sides to return to JCPOA after months of careful consultations that would have laid the groundwork for a longer and stronger arrangement. In the absence of Iran’s cooperation, the Administration continues to coordinate closely with a range of allies and partners, including the E3 and EU, to counter Iran’s nuclear and missile programs through actions such as using domestic measures to replicate the impact of expiring provisions of UNSCR 2231 on transfers of certain missile related technology and UAVs, disrupting weapons shipments, and holding Iran to account at the IAEA. Importantly, the Administration has also continued to ensure that all options remain on the table to address the Iranian threat.

U.S. sanctions targeting Iran for its support of terrorism and destabilizing activities in the region remain in full effect and we will continue to enforce them and to look for ways to enhance their effectiveness. Diplomacy is a valuable tool in the United States’ foreign policy and national security toolkit for achieving a sustainable, effective result, but unfortunately, Iran has not yet shown itself to be serious about engaging diplomatically with the international community to address its concerns over its nuclear program. If confirmed to serve in the Department of Defense, I will ensure we are preparing for all possible contingencies across the U.S. Government and in full coordination with our partners and allies.

45. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, the Trump administration bequeathed President Biden significant sanctions leverage with Iran under the “maximum pressure” policy. In retrospect, do you believe that this leverage should have been used to pursue a “longer and stronger” deal up front, rather than attempting to return to the original deal whose limitations on Iran’s nuclear activities will soon expire?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe Iran should never be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon—and since coming into office, the Biden Administration has imposed new sanctions on Iran and has tried to use that significant leverage to address the issue through diplomacy. I believe that approach was right to pursue. While the JCPOA expiration date allowed for continuous negotiations on extending the deal, now that the United States is no longer a party to the deal, a robust deal must be agreed to that would impose additional limitations on Iran’s nuclear activities. Nevertheless, given the current regional crisis, there is no near-term prospect for a new diplomatic agreement further limiting Iran’s nuclear program.

46. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, on April 21, 2023, U.S. Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley’s clearance was suspended. Congress learned of this from the media in late June, and it was only thereafter that Mr. Malley appears to have been placed on unpaid leave. Nearly 5 months after Mr. Malley’s clearance was suspended, we still do not know the reasons for the clearance suspension, whether Mr. Malley was conducting official business illegally while on leave, and whether the Biden administration intends for him to return. When did you first learn that Mr. Malley’s clearance had been suspended?

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/19/us/politics/avril-haines-antony-blinken-lloyd-austin.html>

Mr. CHOLLET. As these matters do not come within my duties as Counselor, what I know of them has come from public reporting and press statements of the Department of State.

47. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what can you share about the reasons for Mr. Malley's clearance suspension? Please answer in a classified response if necessary.

Mr. CHOLLET. I reiterate that I have no knowledge of this personnel matter beyond what has been in the public record, and that includes the reasons for Mr. Malley's clearance suspension, which I have only read about in media reports. I would refer you to the proper authorities in the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security for further information.

48. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, at what point did Mr. Malley's deputy, Abram Paley, assume responsibility as Acting Special Envoy?

Mr. CHOLLET. My understanding is that Robert Malley is the Special Envoy for Iran and is currently on leave, that Abram Paley is the Deputy Special Envoy for Iran performing the day-to-day duties of the Special Envoy for Iran, and that Mr. Paley is not the Acting Special Envoy for Iran as Robert Malley remains encumbering that position, though on leave.

49. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in retrospect, do you believe that the State Department should have notified Congress of Mr. Malley's status sooner?

Mr. CHOLLET. I have no knowledge of this personnel matter other than what has been in the public record, and that includes what the appropriate State Department officials knew regarding Mr. Malley's situation or when Congress was informed. What I can unequivocally commit to is that, if confirmed, I will treat Congress as the full partner you are, I will be straight with you, will be accessible, will be responsive in a timely manner, and will hold myself to account to meet our shared objectives to make this country safe, secure, and prosperous. This absolutely includes notifying Congress when senior officials have their security clearances revoked as early in the process as the law allows.

50. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in retrospect, do you believe that the State Department should have placed Mr. Malley on unpaid leave sooner?

Mr. CHOLLET. I reiterate that I have no knowledge of this personnel matter outside of what has been in the public record, and that includes what the appropriate State Department officials knew regarding Mr. Malley's situation, when they knew it, and what they did about it. Since such personnel matters are outside my responsibilities as Counselor of the Department of State, I am not familiar with what the law and personnel policies outline regarding placing employees on unpaid leave. However, as a general matter, I believe that on these kinds of personnel matters one should follow the guidance and recommendations of those responsible for implementing those policies.

51. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, according to Iran International, former U.S. Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley attempted to appoint Ali Vaez, an alleged member of the Iranian Government-linked Iran Experts Initiative, to a position on the State Department's Iran negotiating team. However, according to the publication, Mr. Vaez was unable to obtain a security clearance.² Is it accurate that Mr. Vaez was considered for a position at the State Department while you were serving as State Department counselor, and is it true that he was denied a security clearance?

Mr. CHOLLET. I am not familiar with this report or was aware of any consideration or process involving the possible hiring of Mr. Vaez at the State Department, so have no knowledge about the alleged security review referenced in the question or anything that may have resulted from any review.

52. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in your view, should someone who knowingly participates in an Iranian-Government information operation be disqualified from obtaining a security clearance to work in a U.S. national security position? Why or why not?

Mr. CHOLLET. While I have never had the authority or responsibility to investigate or grant security clearances, in my view, I believe if a person knowingly participates in an Iranian Government information operation they should be disqualified from obtaining a security clearance. It is incumbent on any national security

² https://content.iranintl.com/en/investigates/inside-tehran-software/index.html?_gl=1*13x0zq5*_ga*MTU4Mjc3MDU0OC4xNjg5ODg0NTQ5

professional to practice sound operational security and refer concerns to the appropriate security officers and authorities. Certainly, if I had evidence a colleague were a foreign agent or otherwise under improper influence of a foreign government, I would immediately refer my concerns to the appropriate security officers and authorities do exactly that. However, the ultimate decision to disqualify someone from holding a security clearance rests with those charged with investigating allegations and who have access to the complete set of facts surrounding a case. While I have undergone numerous background investigations and continuous vetting for my own security clearance during the past 30 years serving in the government across different positions and agencies, I have never served in a position with the authority and access to make those decisions. I take safeguarding our national security very seriously and would not choose to overstep and make decisions I do not have the authority to make.

53. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, Iran and its terrorist proxies, continue to target U.S. citizens, including former U.S. officials, for assassination in the United States. Do you believe that it would be appropriate for the Biden administration to lift sanctions on Iran while it continues to target Americans for murder here in the United States? Why or why not?

Mr. CHOLLET. This Administration has not lifted U.S. sanctions on Iran and will continue to rigorously enforce these sanctions. Over 190 individuals and entities have been sanctioned this year alone. All available means to protect U.S. citizens, both here at home and abroad, from Iranian threats, will be utilized, in consultation with allies and partners as concerted efforts to deter, contain, and counter Iranian provocations continue.

54. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, the Iran Experts Initiative (IEI) was recently reported to be a foreign influence operation by the Iranian Foreign Ministry. While serving in Government, have you ever been contacted by a member of IEI?

Mr. CHOLLET. I am aware of recent media reports regarding the so-called "Iran Experts Initiative," but had not heard of it until those reports. In my capacity as State Department Counselor, I met once with the International Crisis Group's president and leadership, which included Mr. Ali Vaez. I met once with Ms. Ariane Tabatabai as a "courtesy call" as she was departing the State Department. I am aware that these same reports associated Mr. Vaez and Ms. Tabatabai with this so-called "Iran Experts Initiative."

55. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, have you ever engaged in any way with a member of the IEI?

Mr. CHOLLET. See the response to question 54 above.

56. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, are you aware of anyone under your leadership who has engaged with a member of IEI?

Mr. CHOLLET. No.

57. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, if yes, did you support their engagement or address it in some way?

Mr. CHOLLET. The answer to question #56 renders this question not applicable.

58. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, have you ever engaged with a member of IEI outside of your time as a senior U.S. Government official?

Mr. CHOLLET. To the best of my recollection, I have not had any interaction with the so called "Iran Experts Initiative (IEI)" outside of my time as a senior U.S. Government official.

59. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, please list and detail any engagements or contacts you have had with members of the Iranian Government since the end of the Obama administration.

Mr. CHOLLET. I have not knowingly had any interaction with any members of the Iranian Government.

60. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, did content produced by IEI affiliates, including the International Crisis Group, influence efforts to complete the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)?

Mr. CHOLLET. During my tenure as a U.S. Government official, my observation has consistently been that critical decisions pertaining to U.S. national security, such as the 2015 U.S. decision to enter the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), are based on a range of official U.S. Government assessments of what is

in the best interests of U.S. national security. The JCPOA, which was reached following nearly 2 years of rigorous and principled diplomacy between the P5+1 (United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, Germany) and Iran, was a long-term political arrangement that constrained Iran's nuclear activities and increased international verification and monitoring of the program to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

61. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, have you interacted with any of the following individuals in your capacity as a senior Government official?

- i. Ariane Tabatabai
- ii. Adnan Tabatabai
- iii. Ali Vaez
- iv. Dina Esfandiary
- v. Saeed Khatibzadeh
- vi. Mostafa Zahrani

Mr. CHOLLET. See the response to question 54 above.

62. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, have you ever discussed classified information with Ali Vaez, Ariane Tabatabai, or Adnan Tabatabai? If yes, what would be the implications of that information being shared with Iranian officials? If necessary, you may respond in a classified format.

Mr. CHOLLET. I have never discussed classified information with any of the persons referenced in the question.

63. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, have you received briefings or read intelligence reports on Iranian influence operations against the United States?

Mr. CHOLLET. While I cannot discuss in the public record the specifics of intelligence reports I receive, I am well aware of our adversaries' efforts to project malign influence and undermine our democracy. We are seeing the prospect for a much more significant escalation targeting U.S. forces and personnel across the Middle East region in the near term coming from Iranian proxy militants—and ultimately from Iran. For that reason, we stand ready to continuing to defend and respond decisively, whenever necessary, in the event of an escalation targeting U.S. personnel and interests.

64. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, did any of these briefings concern Iranian efforts to manipulate or co-opt progressive or pro-Iran nuclear deal academics and experts?

Mr. CHOLLET. While I cannot discuss in the public record the specifics of intelligence reports I receive, to the best of my knowledge, I do not recall any briefing on Iranian efforts to manipulate or co-opt so-called progressive or pro-Iran nuclear deal academics and experts. However, I can unequivocally say that this Administration is committed to doing everything it can to counter threats posed by Iran's malign activities and influence. As Secretary Blinken has said, the United States does not seek conflict with Iran, but if Iran or its proxies attack U.S. personnel anywhere, we will defend our people and our security swiftly and decisively. If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress to ensure that the United States has everything it needs to counter threats posed by Iran and protect our national security.

65. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, do you think it is inappropriate for U.S. Government officials to seek guidance from the Iranian Foreign Ministry or any Iranian national before attending events?

Mr. CHOLLET. U.S. Government personnel are required to follow all relevant security and counterintelligence guidelines and requirements pertaining to contacts with Iranian nationals set by their agencies. Pursuant to Department of State policy, with limited exceptions, U.S. Government employees are not authorized to meet with Iranian diplomats or officials without prior Department of State approval.

66. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, do you think it is inappropriate for U.S. Government officials to consult the Iranian Foreign Ministry or any Iranian national before briefing Congress?

Mr. CHOLLET. U.S. Government personnel are required to follow all relevant security and counterintelligence guidelines and requirements pertaining to contacts with Iranian nationals set by their agencies. Pursuant to Department of State policy, with limited exceptions, U.S. Government employees are not authorized to meet with Iranian diplomats or officials without prior Department of State approval.

67. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, how would you address reports that your subordinates engaged in inappropriate contact with foreign officials and/or foreign nationals, especially from designated State sponsors of terrorism?

Mr. CHOLLET. An individual's possession of a security clearance, access to classified information, and the trust and confidence of national security decisionmakers must be carefully managed. In response to reports that a subordinate engaged in inappropriate contact with foreign officials and/or foreign nationals, I would immediately consult with the Department's security professionals to take appropriate precautions, undertake any necessary investigations, and direct any follow-on actions identified from the investigation.

68. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, what would your policy be for your subordinates to engage with foreign officials and/or foreign nationals, especially from designated State sponsors of terrorism?

Mr. CHOLLET. U.S. Government officials at all levels have a responsibility to use sound judgment in their official and personal contacts. If confirmed, my policy would be that subordinates should engage in their official capacity with foreign officials and/or foreign nationals only as required by their official duties. Further, if confirmed, my policy would be that any contact on the part of subordinates in their personal capacity with foreign officials and/or foreign nationals be conducted in accordance with U.S. law and U.S. Government policy, that subordinates fully comply with all Department of Defense requirements to self report to Policy's Security Office those contacts, and that those contacts will be considered as part of DOD's Continuous Evaluation program.

TAIWAN

69. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, do you commit to uphold Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin's testimony in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee that the Biden administration will request replenishment funds to replace defense articles transferred to Taiwan as part of the Biden administration's decision to utilize Presidential drawdown authority?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes. If confirmed, I will advocate that the Department's existing security assistance authorities be complemented by adequate appropriations.

CHINESE SPY BALLOON

70. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, General Glen VanHerck, Commander of U.S. Northern Command, has testified before this Committee that he detected the Chinese surveillance balloon, and notified his chain of command, on January 27, 2023, but did not discuss response options with Secretary Austin until February 1—5 days later. It remains unclear when the Secretary of Defense and President learned of the balloon, and why response options were not presented and considered sooner—such as when the balloon was hovering over unpopulated parts of Alaska and Canada.

If confirmed, do you promise to examine why it took so long for the Department to present options to the President and Secretary and identify the senior officials who were responsible for this delay?

Mr. CHOLLET. The mission of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) is to consistently provide responsive, forward-thinking, and insightful policy advice and support to the Secretary of Defense, and the Department of Defense, in alignment with national security objectives. Although I have no knowledge of the facts and circumstances described in the question above, if confirmed, I pledge to encourage communication across the Department as such communication relates to the OUSD(P) portfolio.

71. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, do you commit to share these findings with the Senate Armed Services Committee in an unclassified form, with a classified annex if necessary?

Mr. CHOLLET. In accordance with DOD Instruction 5400.04, "Provision of Information to Congress," it is essential to the proper functioning of the U.S. Government that Congress receives adequate information concerning all Government programs and operations. I am committed to working in good faith to accommodate this Committee's requests for information while taking care to preserve sensitive executive branch confidentiality interests.

72. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in the early days of the Chinese spy balloon crisis, the State Department appeared eager to downplay it, because Beijing's actions jeopardized Secretary Blinken's planned trip to China, which was subsequently canceled. It would be useful to understand more clearly what was happening at State Department during that period, since you were serving as counselor there. To the best of your recollection, when did either Secretary of State Blinken or Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman first learn that a Chinese surveillance balloon was hovering over North America?

Mr. CHOLLET. While I am unable to discuss here the details of sensitive military intelligence, what I can say is the U.S. Government was tracking the balloon for some time as we were aware of its movements the entire time it was in U.S. airspace. Although I was not directly involved in this issue, based on my recollection, Secretary Blinken was prepared to depart for Beijing on the evening of February 3 for a long-planned visit to the PRC, as a follow-on to the meeting between President Biden and President Xi in Bali last November. On that day, he instead conveyed to PRC State Councilor and Director of the CCP Central Foreign Affairs Office Wang Yi that he would postpone his travel to the PRC in light of the unacceptable presence of the PRC high-altitude surveillance balloon in U.S. airspace. I understand the Department of Defense has provided written communication to the committee on this matter.

73. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, did senior State Department leadership engage the Chinese Government during that crisis? If so, when, and what did the State Department convey to the Chinese Government?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes, Secretary Blinken conveyed to PRC then-State Councilor and Director of the CCP Central Foreign Affairs Office Wang Yi on a February 3 telephone call that this was an irresponsible act and a clear violation of U.S. sovereignty and international law. As I recall, Secretary Blinken then informed Wang Yi he was postponing his trip to Beijing until conditions would allow for it. Our former Deputy Secretary Wendy Sherman, who at the time was leading our PRC efforts internally, also made clear to PRC officials the presence of the surveillance balloon in our airspace was irresponsible and unacceptable. This same message was delivered to PRC senior levels in Washington and Beijing. Secretary Blinken also had an exceptionally direct exchange with Wang Yi on the margins of the Munich Security Conference on February 18, where he relayed such an incursion must never happen again. To manage the competition between our two countries, our approach is to maintain open lines of communication with the PRC at all time—including this incident.

74. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, looking back on the Chinese surveillance balloon crisis, what, if anything, do you believe the State Department should have done differently?

Mr. CHOLLET. Even before the successful operation to take down the PRC's surveillance balloon, Secretary Blinken's decision to postpone his visit was a significant blow to the PRC's propaganda and signaled the Administration's position clearly to Beijing and the rest of the world. The State Department rapidly briefed allies and partners around the world to expose the PRC's global program. The Secretary similarly brought a powerful message of accountability to his meeting with his PRC counterpart at the Munich Security Conference later that month when he condemned the incursion of the PRC surveillance balloon and stressed it must never happen again. The State Department's response demonstrated the importance of our close coordination with allies and partners, and the necessity of maintaining open channels of communication.

RACE AND DIVERSITY

75. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in your book you refer several times to "systemic racism" in the foreign policy community. Please define the term "systemic racism".

Mr. CHOLLET. The Cambridge Dictionary defines systemic racism as "the policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization, and that result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race."³

76. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in your view, was it "systemically racist" to disagree with President Obama's foreign policy decisions?

³ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/systemic-racism>

Mr. CHOLLET. There are many legitimate criticisms of President Obama's foreign policy—I have made many myself, in writing. So, I do not believe that disagreements with President Obama's foreign policy represent systemic racism.

77. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, do you think the U.S. military is systemically racist?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do not.

78. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, you were quoted by The New York Times as saying, "The Army in particular is a pretty bubba-oriented system." What did you mean by that?

Mr. CHOLLET. This article is about the importance of diversity and leadership throughout the Armed Forces. I was stressing the importance of senior leaders making that a priority.

79. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, do you believe the Army officer promotion process is systemically racist?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do not. I believe it is critically important that we have diversity in leadership throughout the Armed Forces.

80. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, do you think the Army should consider an officer's race when making promotion decisions?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe it is critically important that we have diversity in leadership throughout the Armed Forces.

81. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, would you consider an individual's race when making hiring or promotion decisions?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I commit to hiring the most experienced, respected, and effective individuals to carry out the wide range of roles throughout the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

82. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, how would you approach personnel-related decisions in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I would approach personnel decisions with the goal of recruiting and retaining a talented national security workforce. I would seek advice from the Department's human resources and legal experts to ensure decisions are consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

83. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, during your tenure as the Counselor to the Secretary of State, the Department of State established a new mandatory requirement to denote an individual's gender pronouns on e-mail platforms. If confirmed, would you require similar mandatory requirements to denote an individual's gender pronouns on e-mail platforms?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I commit to following all human resource and personnel policies set forth by the Secretary of Defense or his designees.

84. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, if so, which gender pronouns will be available for individuals to choose from?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I commit to following all human resource and personnel policies set forth by the Secretary of Defense or his designees.

PERSONNEL DECISIONS AT STATE DEPARTMENT

85. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in 2022, while you served as the Counselor to the Secretary of State, Rachel Odell—a Department of State employee—publicly participated in a Quincy Institute event and stated that the United States should focus less on military power in the Indo-Pacific as part of a broader rapprochement with the People's Republic of China. Ms. Odell's remarks clearly contradicted the Biden administration's stated policy that the People's Republic of China is the "pacing challenge" and that military power remains critical to advancing the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Do you agree that military power remains critical to advancing the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region? Please begin your answer with yes or no.

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes, military power remains critical to advancing the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy requires a whole of government approach, which also requires leveraging military capability and capacity across land, air, sea, space, and cyberspace. A free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific can only be achieved in a stable and secure region, where governments

can make their own sovereign choices and the region's seas and skies are governed and used according to international law. The United States is focused on enhancing our capabilities to defend these interests and deter aggression against U.S. territory as well as that of our allies and partners.

86. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, did your staff in the Office of the Counselor clear Ms. Odell's remarks for the 2022 Quincy Institute event?

Mr. CHOLLET. Not that I am aware of, as my office is not required to clear on such remarks.

87. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, do you agree that Ms. Odell's remarks contradicts the Biden administration's stated policy objective of strengthening U.S. military power in the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. CHOLLET. While I strongly support the Administration's policy objectives in the Indo-Pacific region, I cannot comment on individual views that are part of an internal personnel matter.

88. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, please provide a comprehensive list of individuals who were appointed to positions in the State Department despite having their nominations for other Biden administration positions returned by the U.S. Senate. For each individual, please specify the position to which he/she was nominated, how many times the U.S. Senate returned his/her nomination, the authority under which the individual was hired to the non-confirmable position, and a brief description of the specific subject-matter qualifications that made the individual who was denied U.S. Senate confirmation an appropriate hire for this non-confirmable position.

Mr. CHOLLET. My duties as Counselor of the State Department do not include such personnel matters, however the below was provided to me from the State Department's Bureau of Global Talent Management:

Dilawar Syed: Syed was nominated in March 2021 to serve as Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration. This nomination was returned twice, but he was ultimately confirmed in June 2023. Syed served in the State Department in an NC-SES position as the Special Representative for Commercial and Business Affairs from February 2022-June 2023. He was deeply qualified for the role having served as an entrepreneur and CEO of several tech companies. He also was the founding Chair of the California Entrepreneurship Task Force and was asked to help lead Silicon Valley's pandemic economic recovery as a member of the Silicon Valley Recovery Roundtable. Syed holds an MBA from the Wharton School and a BA in Economics and Computer Science from the University of Texas at Austin.

Tamara Wittes: Dr. Wittes was nominated in July 2021 to serve as the U.S. Agency for International Development's Assistant Administrator for the Middle East. Her nomination was returned once. She currently serves in an NC-SES position at the State Department as the Director of the Office of Foreign Assistance and previously served as a Senior Advisor in the Office of the Sanctions Coordinator. Dr. Wittes is deeply qualified for both roles, having previously served as a DAS for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at State and in numerous roles at the Brookings Institution, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, and the National Democratic Institute. She is a founder of the Leadership Council for Women in National Security and served on the board of the National Democratic Institute. She is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and Women in International Security.

Calvin Smyre: Smyre was nominated in May 2022 and January 2023 to serve as the Ambassador to Bahamas. His nomination was returned once. He currently serves as a United States Public Delegate to the 78th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Smyre is deeply qualified for this role, having served for 48 years as an elected State Representative in the Georgia General Assembly. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the congressional Black Caucus' prestigious Phoenix Award, being named twice as "Citizen of the Year" in his hometown of Columbus, Georgia, and he has been inducted into Georgia Trend Magazine's Business Hall of Fame.

Janet Keller: Janet Keller was nominated in March 2022 to serve as Member of the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. Her nomination was returned once. Ms. Keller serves as United States Public Delegate to the 78th Session of the General Assembly of the United States. Ms. Keller is deeply qualified for this role. In 1990, she founded Keller Consultants, which provides strategic advice to candidates, campaigns, and private clients in support of their political and philanthropic interests. In 2000, Keller was appointed by Governor Gray Davis to serve for 6 years as a member of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board which seeks to preserve, enhance, and restore California's water resources. During the second term of the Obama-Biden Administration, she served as a mem-

ber of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Keller also served as Secretary and a member of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors of the California Partners Project. Ms. Keller graduated from the University of San Diego with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science.

89. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, according to Jonathan Guyer of Vox, more than 30 Biden administration appointees previously worked at WestExec, a relatively small consulting firm founded by current Secretary of State Antony Blinken.⁴ On its website, WestExec shows a map of the White House that shows the "road to the Situation Room", clearly signaling that business with WestExec could be the "road to the Situation Room". It has also been reported that many former Biden administration officials have taken positions at WestExec since leaving the current administration.⁵

As the Counselor to the Secretary of State, did you have any official contact with any members of WestExec? If so, for what purpose?

Mr. CHOLLET. In my official capacity as Counselor of the State Department, I spoke once with West Exec Co-Founder Michele Flournoy in her personal capacity in the summer of 2021, prior to her making a press appearance about the NATO Summit. This engagement was to assist her in knowing accurate information as to the Administration's positions in this regard. I have also solicited her advice about the role of Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

90. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, will you commit to following every guideline, as specifically outlined in 18 U.S. Code 207 and in other parts of U.S. Code, with respect to post-government employment ethics?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes.

NORTH KOREA POLICY AND PERSONNEL

91. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, Ambassador Sung Kim, the Special Representative for North Korea, is currently dual-hatted as the U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia. Deputy Special Representative for North Korea Jung Pak is currently dual-hatted as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Multilateral Affairs in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Do you agree that North Korea remains one of the most pressing national security challenges for the United States?

Mr. CHOLLET. North Korea continues to be a pressing national security challenge for the United States. The rapid progress that North Korea has made in both its nuclear and ballistic missile programs represents an increased threat to the U.S. Homeland and our Republic of Korea and Japan Allies. Moreover, advances in cruise and solid-fueled missile systems present a growing security challenge to U.S. forces and U.S. security goals in the region. If confirmed, I will ensure that DOD will continue to prioritize planning against the North Korean threat.

92. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, do you agree that North Korea policy is a demanding issue and requires significant coordination with interagency partners and foreign government officials?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes. North Korea policy has become an even more demanding issue, given the high pace of missile testing activity, North Korea's relationship with the People's Republic of China, and, concerning, its reinvigorated relationship with Russia. If confirmed, I will continue to support strong interagency coordination, and further deepen efforts with allies and partners, principally the Republic of Korea and Japan, to take concrete actions to deter North Korean provocation and aggression, and to assure Allies of our extended deterrence commitments.

93. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, do you agree that it is hard to oversee all aspects of North Korea policy from 11 time zones away from Washington?

Mr. CHOLLET. Special Representative Sung Kim and Deputy Special Representative Dr. Jung Pak work together to ensure that DPRK policy is fully covered in both Washington and Asia, and their dual-hatted portfolios are not mutually exclusive, allowing them to address all issues in their area of responsibility simultaneously. Having Special Representative Kim in Jakarta has been advantageous in that it allows him to coordinate in real-time with his counterparts in the Republic of Korea and Japan, including when developing rapid responses to DPRK missile launches and other provocations.

⁴<https://twitter.com/mideastXmidwest/status/1692279666206285848>

⁵<https://twitter.com/mideastXmidwest/status/1692285094134792463>

94. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what percentage of Ambassador Kim's time is spent on North Korea policy?

Mr. CHOLLET. Ambassador Kim works closely with EAP Assistant Secretary Daniel J. Kritenbrink, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Southeast Asia Melissa Brown, Deputy Assistant Secretary Jung Pak, U.S. Mission to Indonesia Staff, the Office of Maritime Southeast Asia Affairs, and the Office of Korean and Mongolian Affairs at the Department of State to achieve our priorities with respect to the DPRK and the U.S.-Indonesia relationship. The Ambassador calibrates the amount of time he spends on any given issue based on the amount of attention it requires and is able to address all issues in his area of responsibility simultaneously.

95. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what percentage of Ambassador Kim's time is spent on Indonesia?

Mr. CHOLLET. Ambassador Kim works closely with EAP Assistant Secretary Daniel J. Kritenbrink, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Southeast Asia Melissa Brown, Deputy Assistant Secretary Jung Pak, U.S. Mission to Indonesia Staff, the Office of Maritime Southeast Asia Affairs, and the Office of Korean and Mongolian Affairs at the Department of State to achieve our priorities with respect to the DPRK and the U.S.-Indonesia relationship. The Ambassador calibrates the amount of time he spends on any given issue based on the amount of attention it requires and is able to address all issues in his area of responsibility simultaneously.

96. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what percentage of Ms. Pak's time is spent on North Korea policy?

Mr. CHOLLET. Deputy Assistant Secretary Pak works closely with EAP Assistant Secretary Daniel J. Kritenbrink, Ambassador Sung Kim, the Office of Korean and Mongolian Affairs, and the Office of Multilateral Affairs at the Department of State to achieve our priorities with respect to the DPRK and multilateral issues in the region. Deputy Assistant Secretary Pak calibrates the amount of time she spends on any given issue based on the amount of attention it requires and is able to address all issues in her area of responsibility simultaneously.

97. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, what percentage of Ms. Pak's time is spent on multilateral issues?

Mr. CHOLLET. Deputy Assistant Secretary Pak works closely with EAP Assistant Secretary Daniel J. Kritenbrink, Ambassador Sung Kim, the Office of Korean and Mongolian Affairs, and the Office of Multilateral Affairs at the Department of State to achieve our priorities with respect to the DPRK and multilateral issues in the region. Deputy Assistant Secretary Pak calibrates the amount of time she spends on any given issue based on the amount of attention it requires and is able to address all issues in her area of responsibility simultaneously.

ABRAHAM ACCORDS

98. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, according to the Washington Free Beacon, while you served as State Department counselor, the State Department distributed internal guidance directing officials to avoid mentioning the Abraham Accords by name in public-facing materials. The guidance directed officials to simply refer to the historic agreements, which were concluded during the Trump administration, as "normalization agreements"⁶. Was the guidance generated in response to requests by the White House, or wholly internal to the State Department?

Mr. CHOLLET. I am not aware of any such "guidance." I have regularly used the term Abraham Accords since assuming the role of Counselor of the Department of State. For example, on September 17, 2021, I authored an op-ed in Newsweek for the anniversary of the Abraham Accords, which celebrated the Abraham Accords as the historic achievements that they are. I continue to refer to the Abraham Accords as such in my public and private engagements.

99. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, who issued this guidance?

Mr. CHOLLET. I'm not aware of any such "guidance." The Administration is committed to advancing the Abraham Accords and encouraging our partners to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel. If confirmed, I will make it my priority to build on the progress we have made in close consultation with Congress and our partners.

⁶<https://freebeacon.com/biden-administration/state-department-shuns-term-abraham-accords/>

100. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, why was this guidance issued?

Mr. CHOLLET. I'm not aware that any such "guidance" was issued. This Administration has been clear, privately and publicly, that the United States strongly supports the Abraham Accords, which continues to be the linchpin for advancing peace and prosperity in the Middle East and protecting our national security interests in the region. As such, we are continuing to work with Israel and other regional countries to deepen them, build upon them, and expand the circle of peace.

101. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, were you aware of this guidance at the time it was issued?

Mr. CHOLLET. No, I am not aware of any such "this guidance." As the Counselor of the Department of State, I have strongly and consistently supported the Abraham Accords, and if confirmed, I will continue to do so in my new role as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

102. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, why was this guidance later rescinded, when was it rescinded, and who rescinded it?

Mr. CHOLLET. I was not aware of any such "guidance," nor am I aware of any "rescission." Since joining the Administration, I have repeatedly referred to the Abraham Accords, as have a host of other senior Administration officials. The Abraham Accords are historic, and this Administration strongly supports them.

CAESAR ACT

103. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, while you served as State Department counselor, the Biden administration negotiated a deal in which gas would have been delivered to Lebanon through a route that included Syria. Experts have described the arrangement as a straightforward violation of American sanctions, including the Caesar Act. To what extent were you involved in diplomacy related to this policy?

Mr. CHOLLET. In my role as Counselor, I have not been personally involved in these discussions. I understand that other U.S. officials across the executive branch have been supportive of this potential World Bank project, but no final determination has been made about the U.S. sanctions implications of that proposal. The United States is focused on maximizing the benefits to the Lebanese people—who continue to struggle with an acute energy crisis—while minimizing any potential benefit to the Assad regime.

104. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, do you believe that the scheme would violate American sanctions, including the Caesar Act, and if not why not?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is my understanding that no final determination has been made about the U.S. sanctions implications of that proposal. The Administration received provisional contracts for the electricity and gas deals last year. The final financing terms and contracts are still being discussed by the parties and the World Bank. The Departments of the Treasury and State will review details of the final financing terms and contracts to assess any relevant sanctions concerns. Only at that time will there be the information needed to make any final determinations.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

105. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, on April 16, 2022, an internal email was circulated inside the State Department stating "over the past several months, a number of people have reported comments that certain candidates could not be hired because: * they have a disability * they are white men * they are straight white men * they are not of the 'right' religion." On July 26, 2022, State Department Chief Diversity and Officer, Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that she had never seen or cleared that email. Were you aware of that email?

Mr. CHOLLET. No, I was not aware of that email.

106. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, did you have any role in clearing that email?
Mr. CHOLLET. No.

107. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, after the email was publicly revealed and discussed in testimony, did you take any action regarding the concerns outlined by that email?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is my understanding that no action was necessary as the e-mail made clear that hiring decisions should never be made on the basis of protected classes, including gender, race, religion, etc. It is my understanding the guidance

email was sent in order to clarify that such rumored actions do not comport with Department policy and are illegal.

108. Senator WICKER. Mr. Chollet, in May 2023, the State Department rolled out a feature that mandated the inclusion of officials' gender pronouns in e-mail correspondence. In your view, should the U.S. Government, departments, or agencies require employees to include their gender pronouns in official correspondence?

Mr. CHOLLET. In May 2023, the Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM) was testing a new Outlook feature that would provide users with the option to voluntarily include their pronouns in the Department's Global Address List. During the test, some employees mistakenly had randomly assigned pronouns added to their profiles. IRM immediately corrected the error, and all errant pronouns were removed from profiles by May 20. The Department of State's position, and mine, is that including pronouns in official correspondence should not be mandatory but rather voluntary and determined by the employee.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

IRAN

109. Senator COTTON. Mr. Chollet, you spoke previously about your concerns regarding Iranian nuclear ambitions and the work of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to reassure allies in the region of continued U.S. support. Iran seemingly showed a willingness to cooperate and sign onto this deal because of the diplomatic isolation, economic sanctions, and strong military pressure. Now that we know that Iran wasn't fully compliant with the JCPOA and is continuing to mature their nuclear program at an alarming rate, what further steps do you believe are necessary to effectively deter and not simply delay their nuclear ambitions?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe diplomacy is the best, most enduring path to ensuring Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon. However, as President Biden has made clear, the United States is committed to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and every option remains on the table. Through a combination of posture, planning, and partnerships, the Department of Defense backstops diplomacy with Iran and deters conflict. I understand that the Department of Defense regularly updates plans to address Iran contingencies and is working with allies and partners to integrate their capabilities to more effectively counter Iran's .

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR M. MICHAEL ROUNDS

FOREIGN MILITARY SALES REFORM

110. Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Chollet, there continues to be delays in the provision of weapons and equipment to our partners and allies, and a years-long foreign military sales (FMS) backlog. What do you see as the primary challenges to improving the timeliness of delivery of the equipment and services in the FMS backlog and are additional authorities needed to help solve this problem?

Mr. CHOLLET. The FMS system writ-large continues to deliver important capabilities to our allies and partners, and a preponderance of those cases are meeting partner needs and expectations. I understand the Department of Defense is pursuing several initiatives to tackle FMS reform, for example accelerating acquisition and contracting support for FMS and further incentivizing the defense industrial base to expand capacity. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing and supporting these efforts moving forward to better meet partner demands.

111. Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Chollet, to what extent is DOD coordinating with State Department to work with our international partners in order to leverage the current historic demand signal for critical munitions and equipment into increased DIB production capacity?

Mr. CHOLLET. The United States faces unprecedented demand from our allies and partners for defense equipment and support. To better coordinate with the private sector on emergent national security needs and surge requirements, DOD is focused on sending a clear, stable demand signal. I understand DOD and the Department of State are closely working with allies and partners to address their most critical defense needs and ensure our ability to provide those capabilities in line with U.S. National Security objectives. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(A&S) to ensure partner requirements are factored into ongoing efforts to encourage industry to ad-

dress global increased demand and expeditiously deliver critical systems in line with the National Defense Strategy.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JONI K. ERNST

ARIANE TABATABAI'S ROLE IN THE STATE AND DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

112. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, during your confirmation hearing, you told me that you “know nothing” about the circumstances surrounding Ms. Tabatabai's case. During your tenure at the State Department, did anyone raise concerns about Ms. Tabatabai's connections with Iranian officials?

Mr. CHOLLET. No person has raised concerns about any State Department employee's alleged connections with Iranian officials with me during my tenure at the State Department, and that includes Ms. Tabatabai.

113. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, in 2021, Iranian dissidents raised concerns about Ms. Tabatabai when she was first hired on to the State Department. The dissidents claimed that Ms. Tabatabai's history of parroting pro-Iran talking points, as well as her familial ties to the Iranian Government, are problematic. At the time, the State Department spokesman dismissed the claims as “personal smears and slander” and stood by Ms. Tabatabai. During this time, you served as the counselor of the State Department. Did you play any role in determining the State Department's response to the 2021 allegations made against Ms. Tabatabai?

Mr. CHOLLET. No. I was not consulted and played no role in the State Department's response to these allegations.

114. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, as the chief of staff to Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC)), Ms. Tabatabai played a key role in forming our counter-terrorism strategy, which often involves countering Iran-backed proxies. Do you believe it is appropriate to have an individual with a history of conferring with Iranian officials in a highly sensitive role related to counter-terrorism and special operations?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe that any qualified individual who has taken an oath to serve their country and has not been found to have violated the rules and regulations governing their ability to hold a security clearance or have been otherwise found to be disqualified should be able to serve.

115. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, do you believe it would be prudent to suspend Ms. Tabatabai's clearance pending review?

Mr. CHOLLET. In any of these kinds of personnel matters I believe it is essential to follow the guidance and recommendations of the proper authorities—those who know all the relevant facts, have investigative responsibilities, and are charged with enforcing the appropriate laws, rules and procedures. Although I have no knowledge of this specific personnel matter as it does not involve my responsibilities as Counselor of the Department of State, the Department of Defense has informed me that Ms. Tabatabai's employment and clearance processes were carried out in accordance with all appropriate laws and policies. As a general matter, my understanding is that with respect to the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA)'s continuous vetting (CV) program, all DOD Service members, civilian employees, and contractor personnel with a security clearance undergo this process. My understanding is that the CV process involves automated record checks that pull data from criminal, terrorism, and financial data bases, as well as public records, at any time during an individual's period of eligibility. When DCSA receives an alert, it assesses whether the alert is valid and worthy of further investigation. DCSA investigators and adjudicators then gather facts and make clearance determinations. CV helps DCSA mitigate personnel security situations early in the process, either by working with the cleared individual to mitigate potential issues, or in some cases suspending or revoking clearances. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that everyone under my area of responsibility adheres to highest security standards and will work with all relevant authorities to enforce that effort.

116. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, do you believe it would be prudent to suspend Ms. Tabatabai's clearance pending review?

Mr. CHOLLET. See the response to question 115 above.

117. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, will you commit to taking steps to suspend her clearance once confirmed?

Mr. CHOLLET. See the response to question 115 above.

118. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, according to the Department of Justice, “an ‘agent of a foreign principal’ is any person who acts as an agent, representative, employee, or servant, or otherwise acts at the order, request, or under the direction or control of a ‘foreign principal’ and ... engages within the United States in political activities, such as intending to influence any U.S. Government official or the American public regarding U.S. domestic or foreign policy.” An ‘agent of a foreign principal’ is legally required to register as a foreign agent under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). In your view, does Ms. Tabatabai’s activities require her registration as an ‘agent of a foreign principal’?

Mr. CHOLLET. As stated above, I have no knowledge of this individual’s alleged activities, nor do I have any expert knowledge of the operation or application of the statute referenced. However, I believe that anyone operating in a position of public trust should abide by the law and act in accordance with U.S. interests and the highest security standards. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that everyone under my area of responsibility does just that and I will work with all relevant authorities to enforce that effort.

119. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, DOD told media outlets that the Department “thoroughly and properly vetted” Ms. Tabatabai before her employment. If confirmed, would you commit to sharing information on whether DOD’s vetting process flagged Ms. Tabatabai’s association with Iranian officials?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I commit to following the law. I understand that the Department of Defense has confirmed that Ms. Tabatabai’s employment and clearance processes were carried out in accordance with all appropriate laws and policies. The Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency has enrolled all DOD Service members, civilian employees, and contractor personnel with a security clearance in its continuous vetting program, which is a process that involves regularly reviewing a cleared individual’s background to ensure they continue to meet security clearance requirements and may continue to hold positions of trust.

IRAN’S THREAT TO U.S. CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS

120. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, American taxpayers are footing the bill to fund the protection of U.S. officials reportedly targeted by Iran. If confirmed, would you commit to sharing with the Committee details on how many U.S. officials are currently targeted by Iran and how much the protection is costing American taxpayers?

Mr. CHOLLET. The mission of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy is to consistently provide responsive, forward-thinking, and insightful policy advice and support to the Secretary of Defense, and the Department of Defense, in alignment with national security objectives. I defer all counterintelligence and security questions to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence & Security.

121. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, during Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi’s recent trip to New York City for the United Nations General Assembly, he reiterated Iran’s efforts to target former U.S. officials involved in the operation against Qassem Soleimani. Given your current role in the State Department, please explain the State Department’s justification in granting President Raisi a waiver for a visa to enter the United States.

Mr. CHOLLET. Visa records are confidential under U.S. law; therefore, I regret I am unable to comment on an individual case. It is my understanding that as host nation of the United Nations, the United States is generally obligated under the U.N. Headquarters Agreement to issue visas to representatives of U.N. member states to travel to the U.N. headquarters district and the United States takes those obligations seriously. At the same time, I know the Biden Administration has not and will not waver in protecting and defending all Americans.

122. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, if the State Department is aware of the Iranian official responsible for the assault, would the State Department give a visa to this official the next time he wishes to enter the United States?

Mr. CHOLLET. Visa records and processes are confidential under U.S. law; therefore, I regret I am unable to comment on an individual case, in particular a hypothetical case. At the same time, I know the Department and the Administration condemns the reported harassment, intimidation, and assault of journalists everywhere, including New York, and continue to forcefully criticize Iran’s treatment of

journalists and actions which degrade press freedoms, both in Iran and internationally.

123. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, in June, the Washington Post obtained classified intelligence reports that said “Iran and its allies are building and training forces to use more powerful armor-piercing roadside bombs intended specifically to target U.S. military vehicles and kill U.S. personnel” in Syria. Since the report’s publication, have you seen any uptick in the threat posed by Iran and its allies to U.S. personnel, particularly those in Special Operations Forces (SOF), in Syria?

Mr. CHOLLET. I cannot comment on any classified intelligence matters. What I will say is that we have not seen any Iran-backed attacks on U.S. personnel in Syria since the Administration’s strikes on Iran-affiliated targets in March 2023.

124. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, what steps would you take to protect U.S. personnel in Syria against increased Iranian aggression?

Mr. CHOLLET. The United States has repeatedly demonstrated our readiness to take necessary and proportionate military action to defend U.S. forces and facilities from attack, or threat of attack. The United States will not hesitate to respond in self-defense. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense remains positioned with executable options to respond to any Iranian attacks.

IRAN’S MARITIME THREAT

125. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, in your response to the advance policy questions, you noted that “The United States has demonstrated that it will not hesitate to respond in self-defense and that it can surge forces to the Middle East in response to an increased Iranian threat, as we are currently doing in the maritime domain.” In May, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) withdrew from the Combined Maritime Forces, reportedly due to frustration that the United States is not doing enough to counter Iran’s maritime aggression. Do you think the UAE is wrong to believe that the United States is not doing enough to counter Iran’s maritime aggression, given your response that the “United States has demonstrated . . . that it can surge forces to the Middle East in response to an increased Iranian threat”?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is my understanding the United Arab Emirates is still a member of the Combined Maritime Forces. I believe that U.S. posture adjustments and related U.S.-led efforts—like the June 25 maritime security conference hosted at our naval headquarters in Bahrain—to uphold freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce have been effective. I understand that in response to an increased Iranian threat to commercial shipping this summer, the United States deployed a number of air and maritime capabilities to the region. We have repeatedly made clear that we can and will surge forces to the Middle East in response to an elevated threat environment and will take coordinated and appropriate action with our allies and partner to counter Iranian maritime harassment. On at least three occasions since March, U.S.-led efforts and presence have deterred the seizure of oil tankers in the Gulf region. If confirmed, I will continue the Department of Defense’s engagement with key allies and partners to join multilateral efforts to ensure freedom of navigation in the maritime domain.

126. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, given UAE’s withdrawal from the U.S.-led maritime coalition to counter Iran’s maritime aggression, once confirmed, do you commit to strengthening U.S. commitment to deterring Iran’s maritime aggression in the region to reassure our allies and partners?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is my understanding the United Arab Emirates is still a member of the Combined Maritime Forces. I share the Administration’s commitment to ensuring freedom of navigation and deterring Iran’s destabilizing activities in the maritime domain, as outlined in the National Security Strategy. The United States will continue to work with like-minded allies and partners who are committed to the free flow of commerce to take appropriate, coordinated actions against threats to this fundamental principle of the rules-based international order.

127. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, I have led multiple oversight efforts to pressure the Biden administration to enforce on-the-books oil sanctions against Iran. And yet, when the United States seized the Suez Rajan for illegally exporting Iranian oil, U.S. companies were reluctant to unload the oil on the Suez Rajan because they feared Iranian retaliation. Do you think the United States is adequately responding to Iran’s maritime threat when Iran has successfully intimidated our own companies?

Mr. CHOLLET. The United States has clearly demonstrated that it is committed to ensuring the free flow of commerce and will not tolerate Iranian maritime threats. In response to those threats, the Department of Defense has increased its presence and ability to monitor the Strait of Hormuz and surrounding waters. Additionally, I understand that DOD continues to work with our allies and partners to improve interoperability and cooperation against Iranian maritime threats.

128. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, do you commit to strengthening U.S. response to Iran's maritime aggression to assure U.S. companies that they are safe from Iranian maritime coercion?

Mr. CHOLLET. The United States is committed to ensuring freedom of navigation and upholding the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea for the benefit of all countries. For example, in early July, U.S. forces deterred the Iranian military from seizing two commercial tankers, one of which belonged to Chevron, in international waters off the coast of Oman.

129. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, Task Force 59 in U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) has played a crucial role in countering Iranian maritime aggression in U.S. Central Command's (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR). If confirmed, what steps do you intend to take to apply lessons learned from Task Force 59 to other combatant commands (COCOM), including U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM)?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is my understanding Task Force 59 provides a window into the possibilities of all-domain attritable autonomy, by operating platforms equipped with sensors, radars, and cameras for navigation, data collection, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. These new data flows enhance the Navy's ability to persistently monitor the surrounding seas and enable the Navy to be more predictive and precise in deploying its crewed assets. We're already seeing the value of these small, technologically advanced, and affordable systems in other theaters, including USINDOPACOM. If confirmed, I will work with the appropriate offices within Policy and across DOD to identify new opportunities to scale up these systems and explore how we can integrate partners into these innovation efforts.

130. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, what steps do you intend to take to counter Iranian cyber and hybrid warfare tactics, especially in the maritime domain?

Mr. CHOLLET. Iran continues to improve its cyber capabilities, threatening the United States, Israel, and other nations with malicious cyber activities and cyber-enabled malign influence activities. The Department's 2023 Cyber Strategy highlights the Department's efforts to mitigate the threat of State and non-State malicious cyber actors, to include Iran, while defending U.S. national interests. If confirmed, I will support the Department's implementation of our 2023 Cyber Strategy as well as whole-of-government efforts to degrade and disrupt malicious cyber activity.

HOSTAGES NEGOTIATIONS

131. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, this administration finalized a prisoner swap with Iran that not only granted clemency to five Iranian nationals charged with sanctions violations and other Federal crimes, but also gave Iran access to previously frozen funds. Why do you think it is advisable to give money to Iran who will likely to use the \$6 billion dollars to fund terrorist activities?

Mr. CHOLLET. The funds are intended to be used for humanitarian purposes only and are inaccessible to Iran. As NSC Spokesman John Kirby stated at a press conference on October 12th, the funds would go to "approved vendors, that we approved, to go buy food, medicine, and medical equipment, agricultural products, and ship it into Iran directly to the benefit of the Iranian people." In an interview on October 13th, Kirby further elaborated that "Tehran would never see a dime of it," and this is "the exact same arrangement that Secretary Pompeo, when he was secretary of State, set up under the previous administration. We didn't change those rules." Given the fluidity of this situation, I commit to keeping Congress informed if there are any changes to report.

132. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, what safeguards do you have in place to ensure these funds will not be spent on supporting Iran's proxies and terrorist activities?

Mr. CHOLLET. The funds are intended to be used for humanitarian purposes only and are inaccessible to Iran. As NSC Spokesman John Kirby stated at a press conference on October 12th, the funds would go to "approved vendors, that we approved, to go buy food, medicine, and medical equipment, agricultural products, and

ship it into Iran directly to the benefit of the Iranian people.” In an interview on October 13th, Kirby further elaborated that “Tehran would never see a dime of it,” and this is “the exact same arrangement that Secretary Pompeo, when he was secretary of State, set up under the previous administration. We didn’t change those rules.” Given the fluidity of this situation, I commit to keeping Congress informed if there are any changes to report.

133. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, on September 12, 2023, Iranian President Raisi told U.S. media that Tehran would spend the \$6 billion released by the Biden administration “wherever we need it”. When he was further asked whether the money would be used for other purposes apart from humanitarian needs, Raisi said: “Humanitarian means whatever the Iranian people needs, so this money will be budgeted for those needs, and the needs of the Iranian people will be decided and determined by the Iranian Government.” When the Iranian leader has already publicly committed to using the funds for “wherever we need it,” can you really trust that Iran would only use the released \$6 billion on humanitarian needs?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do not trust Iran, nor do I take at face value any assertion members of that regime may make. That’s why the funds in question have strict oversight, are intended to be used for humanitarian purposes only, and are inaccessible to the Iranian regime. As NSC Spokesman John Kirby stated at a press conference on October 12th, the funds would go to “approved vendors, that we approved, to go buy food, medicine, and medical equipment, agricultural products, and ship it into Iran directly to the benefit of the Iranian people.” In an interview on October 13th, Kirby further elaborated that “Tehran would never see a dime of it,” and this is “the exact same arrangement that Secretary Pompeo, when he was secretary of State, set up under the previous administration. We didn’t change those rules.” Given the fluidity of this situation, I commit to keeping Congress informed if there are any changes to report.

Yet to be clear, to date none of these funds have been spent or accessed by Iran or third-party vendors for any purposes. And whenever they are, no one in the regime will touch them, and they can only be spent on humanitarian items for the Iranian people. Across multiple U.S. administrations, including prior administrations of both political parties, it has remained longstanding U.S. policy to ensure our sanctions do not prevent humanitarian goods from flowing to ordinary people, no matter how objectionable their governments. The availability of these funds for the purchase of food, medicine, medical devices, and agricultural products is consistent with that policy.

134. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, does the State Department have any concern whatsoever that the \$6 billion deal might incentivize Iran to take more U.S. hostages in the hope of a big payday?

Mr. CHOLLET. The funds are intended to be used for humanitarian purposes only and are inaccessible to Iran. As NSC Spokesman John Kirby stated at a press conference on October 12th, the funds would go to “approved vendors, that we approved, to go buy food, medicine, and medical equipment, agricultural products, and ship it into Iran directly to the benefit of the Iranian people.” This Administration will continue taking steps to reduce the risk of wrongful detentions through a variety of tools including sanctions and travel advisories.

135. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, are you concerned that the release of these legally frozen funds will work against deterrence efforts with not only Iran, but also against Russia, China, and other states from viewing hostage-taking as a profitable enterprise?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Biden administration has been quite public that it is committed to bringing home Americans wrongfully detained overseas and promoting accountability for those responsible. The Administration is committed to using all available tools to increase pressure on those who would engage in the practice of unlawful arbitrary detention.

SECURITY CLEARANCE INCIDENT SURROUNDING MR. ROBERT MALLEY

136. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, many of my colleagues were alarmed to learn that senior diplomat and top Iran envoy Robert Malley could have mishandled classified information, yet kept doing State Department work for weeks after his clearance was suspended. The Department of State Inspector General has also determined that these actions warrant a special review. Do you commit to providing Congress with information regarding the reasons for Mr. Malley’s security clearance suspension?

Mr. CHOLLET. I have no knowledge of this personnel matter other than what has been in the public record, and that includes what the appropriate State Department officials knew regarding Mr. Malley's situation. What I can unequivocally commit to is that, if confirmed, I will treat Congress as the full partner you are, I will be straight with you, will be accessible, will be responsive in a timely manner, and will hold myself to account to meet our shared objectives to make this country safe, secure, and prosperous. This absolutely includes notifying Congress when senior officials have their security clearances revoked as early in the process as the law and proper procedure allows.

137. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, do you commit to providing Congress with information on the delay in Mr. Malley's suspension as Special Envoy following his security clearance suspension?

Mr. CHOLLET. The information you have requested is controlled by the Department of State and relates to matters that lay outside my duties as Counselor, and any inquiries in this regard should be addressed to the Department of State.

138. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, do you commit to providing Congress with information on whether Mr. Malley properly disclosed his connections to the Iran Exports Initiative and its members during his security clearance investigation process?

Mr. CHOLLET. The information you are requesting relates to issues that are not within my duties as Counselor. The Department of State controls any such information that might exist in this regard, and any inquiries should be addressed to the Department of State.

139. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, in August, regime mouthpiece Tehran Times published what the outlet said was a Sensitive But Unclassified U.S. Government memo on Mr. Malley's suspension. Is the memo an authentic U.S. Government document?

Mr. CHOLLET. The information you are requesting relates to issues that are not within my duties as Counselor. The Department of State controls any such information that might exist in this regard, and any inquiries should be addressed to the Department of State.

140. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, if the memo is an authentic U.S. Government document, we would like to know how a regime mouthpiece obtained it. If confirmed, would you commit to sharing what we know today about how Tehran Times obtained the memo?

Mr. CHOLLET. None of these matters fall within my duties as Counselor. The Department of State controls any information on these topics, and inquiries in this regard should be addressed to the Department of State.

COORDINATION WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

141. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, last year, I spearheaded the DEFEND Act, which has helped unite our Middle East partners against Iranian aggression. Senator Jacky Rosen and I recently advanced that effort with the MARITIME Act to direct similar integration at sea. How do you plan to coordinate DOD efforts with regional partners, such as Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Israel, to address shared concerns related to Iran?

Mr. CHOLLET. Regional initiatives such as the Abraham Accords and the Negev Forum provide opportunities for Israel and its neighbors to increase cooperation in the defense and regional security sectors. The United States is regularly convening defense working groups with the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, to include one working group specifically focused on air defense. The alignment of Israel into the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility expands opportunities for regional defense integration, including improving military interoperability across all U.S. partners in the Middle East and increasing opportunities to share information and early warning. If confirmed, I intend to continue these critical efforts by setting a leadership environment that prioritizes integration and interoperability in policy, practice, and senior leader engagements.

142. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, what role do you believe regional defense integration against Iran could play in deepening and expanding the Abraham Accords?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Abraham Accords marked a critical, strategic milestone for normalized relations between Israel and its neighbors. The Administration continues efforts to deepen that integration across all sectors—as envisioned in the Abraham Accords—to include defense and security. The 2022 National Defense Strategy

(NDS) and the 2022 Missile Defense Review (MDR) advanced this focus on integrating by calling for a multilateral and integrated approach to deterring adversaries and improving regional defense. In the Middle East, the NDS prioritizes efforts to cooperate with regional partners to advance an integrated air and missile defense capability to address the persistent threat of Iranian ballistic and cruise missiles, manned and unmanned aerial systems, and rocket attacks. If confirmed, I will continue the Department's work to widen the circle of integration by demonstrating that increased interoperability among Abraham Accords nations and the United States improves collective defenses against Iran-backed threats.

143. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, what role do you believe that the Department of Defense has in strengthening defense cooperation and integration in the Middle East, especially among Abraham Accord members and potential members?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Department of Defense, along with the Department of State, is actively working to advance multilateral efforts to address shared threats in the Middle East. These efforts include diplomatic engagement and defense regional constructs, as well as U.S. Central Command-led efforts at the operational level to demonstrate the tangible benefits of integration and interoperability.

IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

144. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, the Iran nuclear agreement clearly failed to curtail Iran's missile program and regional influence since Iran has continued to ignore limitations on its nuclear program. Do you think that any regime that is actively trying to kill American citizens both at home and abroad would be responsible with nuclear material?

Mr. CHOLLET. U.S. policy is to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. The United States is pursuing principled diplomacy in coordination with allies and partners to constrain Iran's nuclear activities. Further, I understand that DOD supports measures to limit Iranian nuclear activities applicable to a nuclear weapons program and to ensure the greatest possible level of international transparency and verification. A verifiable diplomatic agreement provides the most enduring pathway to ensure that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon. However, should diplomacy fail, the Department of Defense must continue to prepare for all possible options and contingencies with our allies and partners to ensure Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon.

145. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, just last month, the United Nations (U.N.) nuclear watchdog harshly criticized Iran for barring several of its most experienced inspectors from monitoring the country's disputed atomic program. What do you believe needs to be done to ensure Iran never gets a nuclear weapon?

Mr. CHOLLET. U.S. policy is to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. I understand that DOD supports measures to limit Iranian nuclear activities applicable to a nuclear weapons program and to ensure the greatest possible level of international transparency and verification. However, as President Biden has made clear, the United States is committed to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. The Department of Defense regularly updates plans to address Iran contingencies and is working with allies and partners to integrate their capabilities to more effectively counter Iran's destabilizing activities. This includes strengthening Israel's military capabilities.

146. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, in 2015, you told Politico that: "we have a huge problem with Iran outside of the nuclear space ... and that will continue to exist even if we get a nuclear deal." Today, do you agree with your own statement from 2015?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes. Iran's malign behavior, and the threat it poses to both U.S. forces and allied and partners forces in the region, remains a major issue. One of the foremost responsibilities I would have if confirmed for this position is ensuring that we are doing whatever we can to deter Iran and push back from its malign behavior across the region and around the world.

147. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, do you have any concerns that a new nuclear deal with Iran would exacerbate the "huge problem with Iran outside of the nuclear space," specifically by giving Iran the oil money it needs to sponsor anti-U.S. terrorist and proxy groups across the Middle East?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe it is in U.S. national interests to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, and to the best extent possible, to do so without exacerbating other aspects of Iranian-based threats. Previous agreements had strict guidelines in

place as to who could access any funds involved in any arrangements with Iran. For instance, in the case of the recent prisoner release arrangement, the funds are intended to be used for humanitarian purposes only and are inaccessible to the Iranian regime. As NSC Spokesman John Kirby stated at a press conference on October 12th, the funds would go to “approved vendors, that we approved, to go buy food, medicine, and medical equipment, agricultural products, and ship it into Iran directly to the benefit of the Iranian people.” In an interview on October 13th, Kirby further elaborated that “Tehran would never see a dime of it,” and this is “the exact same arrangement that Secretary Pompeo, when he was secretary of State, set up under the previous administration. We didn’t change those rules.”

Across multiple U.S. administrations, including prior administrations of both political parties, it has remained longstanding U.S. policy to ensure our sanctions do not prevent humanitarian goods from flowing to ordinary people, no matter how objectionable their governments. The availability of these funds for the purchase of food, medicine, medical devices, and agricultural products is consistent with that policy.

SANCTIONS ON IRANIAN OIL EXPORTS

148. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, according to an August report by Bloomberg News, “U.S. officials privately acknowledge they’ve gradually relaxed some enforcement of sanctions on Iranian oil sales. Tehran has restored production to the highest level since the ban kicked in 5 years ago and is shipping its most crude to China in a decade.” During your time at the State Department, were you part of any policy decisions to relax enforcement of sanctions on Iranian oil sales?

Mr. CHOLLET. To my knowledge, this Administration has not lifted Iran energy-related sanctions and will continue to enforce U.S. sanctions on Iran. Since 2021, over 180 individuals and entities related to Iran’s petroleum and petrochemical sectors or related to moving and laundering the illicit proceeds of these sectors have been sanctioned. Over 40 vessels have been identified as blocked property of these sanctioned entities. There is frequent engagement with other countries to strongly discourage them from taking steps that contravene sanctions on Iran.

149. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, has the Biden administration made any policy decisions to relax enforcement of sanctions on Iranian oil sales?

Mr. CHOLLET. No. The U.S. Government continues to enforce our sanctions on Iran and pursue sanctions evaders. We also regularly engage with other countries to strongly discourage them from taking steps that contravene sanctions on Iran.

150. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, please explain why Tehran has been able to attain record oil export volumes despite persistent U.S. efforts to fully enforce sanctions on Iranian oil sales.

Mr. CHOLLET. Although the regime continues to make efforts to evade U.S. sanctions, evasion is very costly. My understanding is that the regime receives only a fraction of the market price for the oil it can sell.

151. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, in what ways have U.S. enforcement efforts fallen short to allow record Iranian oil exports?

Mr. CHOLLET. The U.S. Government continues to enforce our sanctions on Iran and pursue sanctions evaders. Although Iranian regime continues to make efforts to evade U.S. sanctions, evasion is very costly. Since January 2021, the U.S. has sanctioned dozens of individuals and entities across multiple jurisdictions, including in the PRC, UAE, and Southeast Asia for playing a critical role in the production, sale, and shipment of hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of Iranian petrochemicals and petroleum products. We also continue to regularly engage with other countries to strongly discourage them from taking steps that contravene sanctions on Iran. We have also engaged in an extensive diplomatic campaign to ensure Iran is not able to sell oil to new buyers. If confirmed, I commit to working with my inter-agency partners to strengthen and enforce our sanctions regime.

152. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, do you commit to directing DOD to fully enforce U.S. sanctions on Iran?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes. The Administration continues to enforce our sanctions on Iran and pursue sanctions evaders.

153. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, do you agree that Tehran is using its record oil export revenue to support its destabilizing activities, including funding its nuclear program and supporting Iran-backed proxies and terrorist groups?

Mr. CHOLLET. Under the Biden Administration, the U.S. Government has designated numerous regime officials, affiliates, and supporters, countering the full range of Iran's destabilizing behavior, from its terrorist plots to its missile program. The impact of our efforts is clear in the economic data.

ABORTION TRAVEL POLICY

154. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)), you are the principle staff for all matters concerning the exercise of policy. As such, you will be in charge of the National Defense Strategy, which is the policy to protect the Nation and others. If confirmed, would you continue to support the DOD abortion travel policy that continues to harm that which you are in charge of protecting?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed as the USD(P), I would not have oversight of the DOD reproductive healthcare policy. That responsibility falls to the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness. However, I fully agree with Secretary Austin that the health and readiness of our force is critical to implementing our National Defense Strategy. Women make up 17 percent of the force and are the fastest growing subpopulation in the military. Women's health is important to the overall readiness of America's military. They deserve to have access to reproductive care.

REDUCING U.S. PRESENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

155. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, in November 2021, you endorsed a report published by the Center for New American Security that argued in favor of a "smaller and smarter footprint" in the Middle East. At a Center for New American Security event discussing the report, you said that "our goal is to right-size that military presence" in the Middle East. Do you have any concerns that reducing U.S. presence in the Middle East might send the wrong messages to our allies and partners about U.S. commitment to the region?

Mr. CHOLLET. DOD has a significant force presence in the Middle East, supported by forces that our allies and partners contribute, and continuously evaluates the appropriate mix of forces around the world. Earlier this year, the Department supported Juniper Oak, the largest, most complex combined exercise DOD had ever conducted with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), which increased the U.S. ability to respond to contingencies without major impacts to the European and Indo-Pacific theaters. No one should doubt our resolve or capabilities to defend ourselves and all those who work alongside us to keep the Middle East region secure.

156. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, do you have any concerns that reducing U.S. presence in the Middle East might send the wrong messages to our adversaries, especially Iran, about U.S. commitment to the region?

Mr. CHOLLET. The National Security Strategy directs the Department to "retain the necessary American military presence in the region to protect the United States and our allies from terrorist attacks and preserve a favorable regional balance of power." We must continue to address major security challenges in the region in effective and sustainable ways, including prioritizing cooperation with our regional and global partners, and demonstrating the United States' capability to rapidly project power if our interests are threatened. If confirmed, I will continue to assess U.S. military presence in the region and make recommendations to support our national security interests.

157. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, which military assets and programs in the Middle East would you "right-size"?

Mr. CHOLLET. The National Defense Strategy prioritizes the need to sustain and strengthen U.S. deterrence against China, the PRC, our pacing challenge, and then Russia, while remaining vigilant against other persistent threats, including those posed by North Korean, Iran and other Violent Extremist Organizations. If confirmed, I will seek to ensure that our global resources are being prioritized in alignment with the Strategy, while also maintaining the necessary balance of military assets and programs in other critical regions such as the Middle East.

158. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, China is increasing its influence in the Middle East, conducting its first ever military exercise with the UAE in August and concluding a Saudi-Iran agreement earlier this year. How do we "right-size" U.S. military presence in the region without inviting China to fill the vacuum?

Mr. CHOLLET. Maintaining the United States' position as the "partner of choice" for our allies and partners across the globe is critical to our ability to maintain and strengthen deterrence. If confirmed, I will seek to ensure that the Department of

Defense supports a whole of government effort to enhance cooperative activities and integrate our regional security approach, while also prioritizing resources against the greatest threats to our Nation.

159. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, do you commit to maintaining a robust U.S. military presence in the Middle East to assure our allies and deter our adversaries, including Iran and extremist terrorist groups?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is my understanding the Department of Defense constantly monitors the environment and adjusts forces globally to address threats and global priorities. If confirmed, I will seek to ensure a sufficient level of U.S. military presence is maintained in the Middle East to assure our allies and partners and deter our adversaries. As the Department's response to Iranian maritime provocations and Hamas' attack on Israel demonstrates, the United States can rapidly flow forces into the region to defend U.S. interests.

SOUTHERN BORDER AND THE FENTANYL CRISIS

160. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, when the Trump administration deployed troops on the Southern border in 2018, you told the Associated Press that "this is not a good use of U.S. military resources". Do you still believe this to be the case, even as fentanyl and fentanyl precursors smuggled across the Southern border contributes to a fentanyl epidemic responsible for the death of 70,000 Americans every year?

Mr. CHOLLET. As part of the National Drug Control Strategy, DOD counterdrug efforts support interagency and foreign law enforcement partners, who have the authority to conduct interdiction operations and make arrests. The Department of Homeland Security and partner nations have the lead for interdiction and apprehension of illicit drugs passing through the transit zone. The Department of Defense has supported the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) mission at the southwest border for 18 of the last 22 years. In many cases, this support has been provided on a non-reimbursable basis. DOD does not plan or program for this Defense Support of Civilian Agencies support. It is an important DHS mission, and the Department's goal is to ensure DHS has the capabilities and resources to continue this mission with only in-extremis support from DOD. This will allow DOD to focus time and resources on execution of the 2022 National Defense Strategy priorities of Defending the homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the People's Republic of China (PRC); Deterring strategic attack against the United States, Allies, and partners; Deterring aggression, while being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary—prioritizing the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific region, then the Russia challenge in Europe; and Building a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem.

161. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, do you agree with the statement: "border security is national security"?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes, I agree that border security is integral to our Nation's national security.

162. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, do you commit to making a visit to the southwest border one of your first stops?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to visit DOD personnel deployed to support DHS at the southwest border as soon as possible.

163. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, in your response to advance policy questions, you responded that the DOD's role at the southwest border "should be reserved for circumstances when military-unique capabilities are critical, and even then should only be provided temporarily". Please explain what are some specific "circumstances" that you believe DOD should play a role in at the southwest border.

Mr. CHOLLET. In general, the circumstance in which I believe it is appropriate for DOD to play a role at the southwest border is when DHS requests critical, military-unique capabilities that are not inherent to DHS and is allowed by law. Some of these capabilities include:

1. Unmanned Aircraft. In the past, DOD provided unmanned aircraft in support of DHS. At that time, unmanned aircraft were, from a DHS perspective, a military-unique capability. Today, DHS has unmanned aircraft, but periodically may not have enough unmanned aircraft to meet mission requirements.

2. Planning assistance and process improvement. For example, DOD recently provided planners to assist with the development of air transportation schedules. By

providing support in this capacity, DOD can enable process improvements that create operational efficiencies, free up DHS resources, and enhance DHS capabilities.

3. Rapid contracting capability. DOD's rapid contracting capability means that DOD can identify, source, and resource requirements more quickly than most other Federal agencies. By bringing this resource to bear, on a reimbursable basis, DOD can rapidly and efficiently establish facilities and provide requested services while long term sustainment plans are developed. (AFCAP, LOGCAP, etc.)

It is my understanding that the Department of Defense has helped the Department of Homeland Security fill critical capabilities and capacity gaps in its efforts to secure the southern border for 18 of the last 22 years. DOD supports DHS's work with Congress and the Administration to sustainably increase DHS's resources so that DHS can manage its mission at the southern border and reduce or end reliance on DOD support.

164. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, how would you prioritize and allocate DOD resources, including personnel and technology, to support border security?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is my understanding that the Secretary of Defense, with the advice of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the Commander of U.S. Northern Command, and other key DOD officials, prioritizes and allocates DOD capabilities, resources, and personnel to all DOD missions and activities, including when DOD supports approved DHS requests for assistance.

Currently, I understand the Secretary of Defense has authorized up to 3,300 soldiers for detection and monitoring; information analysis; aviation; logistical support; support for operation and maintenance of aerostat balloons; and use of Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, to transport undocumented noncitizens from Del Rio, Texas, to DHS custody locations throughout the United States.

165. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, how can DOD support a whole-of-government strategy to counter the fentanyl crisis?

Mr. CHOLLET. I understand DOD is already supporting a whole-of-government strategy through multiple lines of effort in the National Drug Control Strategy put out by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, as well as the Administration's Strategic Implementation Plan to Commercially Disrupt the Illicit Fentanyl Supply Chain. If confirmed, I will work with interagency partners to ensure that DOD's support for the whole-of-government strategy is as effective as possible. DOD provides substantial intelligence support across the Federal Government, enabling and enhancing U.S. Government actions to target drug traffickers and their networks, including illicit precursor chemical supply chains, and illicit financial flows. DOD intelligence has supported numerous successful seizures and interdictions of illicit drugs, money, and weapons.

Stemming the flow of fentanyl and fentanyl precursors and disrupting the organizations responsible for these flows is a priority for DOD's counterdrug program. DOD's counterdrug program does not have a single specific line item or budget category associated with countering fentanyl; over 59 percent of the \$855 million counterdrug budget is focused on the Western Hemisphere. While fentanyl is the top priority because of its deadly effects, supporting efforts to reduce the flow of other illicit drugs remains an important part of the overall campaign against Mexican and other drug trafficking organizations, as they derive significant revenue from the trafficking of these drugs. For example, the flow of cocaine from South America to Europe generates billions of dollars of revenue each year for the Mexican drug trafficking organizations.

166. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, the U.S. military must coordinate with our allies and partners, especially Mexico, to meet the unprecedented challenge posed by fentanyl trafficking across the Southern border. If confirmed, how would you engage with foreign governments to address this fentanyl crisis?

Mr. CHOLLET. DOD works to maintain strong defense relationships with its international partners, including Mexico. However, countering drug-trafficking and border security are law enforcement matters, and the Department of State leads engagement with allies and partners in such matters. I understand that DOD supports civilian-led, governmentwide efforts to work in partnership with allies and partners to address the fentanyl threat. If confirmed, I will work in collaboration with interagency counterparts to ensure DOD is contributing effectively in the whole-of-government engagement to address this urgent administration priority.

167. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, the U.S. military has a key role in countering the trafficking of illicit drugs, including fentanyl, and their precursors across the

Southern border. How would you coordinate and collaborate with other Federal agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security and the Drug Enforcement Agency, to tackle this threat?

Mr. CHOLLET. Countering the trafficking of illicit drugs, including fentanyl, across the southern border of the United States is a law enforcement matter. I understand that DOD works closely with interagency partners at the national, Combatant Command, and country-team level to align its support with the needs of law enforcement partners.

DOD is a National Drug Control Program Agency and works with other members to implement the actions assigned by the National Drug Control Strategy. DOD is also a supporting agency for the Administration's new Strategic Implementation Plan to Commercially Disrupt the Illicit Fentanyl Supply Chain. DOD participates in multiple interagency bodies, such as the Interdiction Committee and the U.S. Council on Transnational Organized Crime, to coordinate at the strategic level.

At the operational level, DOD supports interagency partners primarily through detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime trafficking of illegal drugs into the United States and through provision of intelligence analysis to support investigations, interdictions, arrests, and designations of drug traffickers. If confirmed, I will assess how effectively the Department works with its interagency partners to address the threat of illegal drugs and identify any opportunities for improvement.

WAR IN UKRAINE AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

168. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, what does victory in Ukraine look like to you, and does it involve Ukraine's re-conquest of all its occupied territories, including Crimea?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe we should not decide anything about Ukraine without Ukraine. As Secretary Austin has stated, Ukraine will decide what victory looks like, and I won't presume to speak for the Ukrainian people or their leadership. However, as I have discussed with Ukrainian officials, I believe the end State should be a democratic, independent, sovereign and prosperous Ukraine able to defend its borders and deter further aggression. The United States has been very clear that this war could end immediately if Russia were to withdraw today. Until then, I believe the U.S. Government should continue to provide Ukraine with the security assistance it needs to defend itself from, and push back against, Russian aggression. And if confirmed, I will work to support Ukraine to that end. That means getting Ukraine what it needs to defend itself but also helping to build out its future force so it can deter future Russian threats, defend itself, and if necessary defeat Russia on the battlefield.

169. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, what would DOD do to support your vision of victory in Ukraine?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, and with the support of the Congress, I will continue to build on the Department of Defense's immense efforts by regularly engaging Ukrainian counterparts—as well as Allies and partners—to ensure we maintain a good understanding of Ukraine's ongoing capability requirements and get Ukraine the urgent capabilities needed to counter Russia's ongoing war of aggression.

170. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, do you believe the U.S. Government has given all the weapons necessary to Ukraine to secure victory?

Mr. CHOLLET. Throughout Russia's war, I believe the Department of Defense has been committed to sending Ukraine what Ukrainian forces need to be successful on the battlefield, when they need it. If confirmed, I am committed to continuing the Administration's historic efforts to enable Ukraine to defend itself against Russian aggression and retake its sovereign territory.

171. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, do you commit to directing DOD to give Ukraine all the weapons they need to win their war?

U.S. equipment has been critical in supporting Ukraine's ability to push back Russia's aggression. If confirmed, I am committed to continuing this historic effort. Ultimately, there are several factors that shape U.S. security assistance to Ukraine, including resource constraints, training requirements, technology security considerations, and readiness impacts on U.S. forces, as well as the capacity of the industrial base.

172. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, in January 2015, less than a year after Russia's first invasion of Ukraine, you played a critical role in the implementation of the European Infrastructure Consolidation (EIC) initiative, which sought to shutter 15

U.S. bases in Europe. The initiative would have closed bases in Britain, Germany, Italy, and Portugal. At the time, you said that “the EIC adjustments do not diminish our ability to meet our commitments to allies and partners”. In March 2019, you criticized President Trump’s push to seek greater contribution from European allies as a “totally self-defeating” measure that harms “U.S. bases [that] are an essential part of protecting American interests”. Why did you support closing European bases in 2015, when you said in 2019 that these bases are an “essential part of protecting American interests”?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe that posture decisions should depend on military advice and assessments. The changes in EIC in 2015 occurred at a time when troops were rotating through facilities that were not up to standard. Meanwhile, DOD had invested \$985 million into the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) for new exercises, patrols, and shows of force, which later informed the development of the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI). In July 2021, DOD approved Army’s request to maintain several sites from the original list, given their operational value and change in the security environment. These changes helped consolidate U.S. posture priorities at a lower cost and did not hurt our operational capabilities.

173. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, do you commit to avoid closing U.S. bases in Europe without consulting Congress?

Mr. CHOLLET. As senior DOD officials have said, posture decisions must be informed by military advice and assessments. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with my counterparts in the combatant commands and Joint Staff to think about our requirements and the best balance of forces across global posture to ensure all of the commands are resourced appropriately for the challenges and threats we face.

174. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, in July 2018, the New York Times published a story about then-President Trump’s letter to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] allies warning that the United States expects the allies to spend 2 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on defense spending. In this story, you gave the following statement: “Trump still seems to think that NATO is like a club that you owe dues to, or some sort of protection racket where the U.S. is doing all the work protecting all these deadbeat Europeans while they’re sitting around on vacation, and now he is suggesting there are consequences.” On June 13, 2023, President Biden said the following: “I expect allies to agree that 2 percent of GDP for defense has to be a minimum of what allies have to invest in our shared security.” Do you believe President Biden’s expectation that NATO allies spend 2 percent of their GDP for defense reflects his thinking that “NATO is like a club that you owe dues to, or some sort of protection racket where the U.S. is doing all the work protecting all these deadbeat Europeans”?

Mr. CHOLLET. European NATO Allies and Canada have increased defense spending for nine straight years, and all agree with the idea of fair burden sharing. According to the Alliance’s most recent estimates, there is an 8.3-percent real increase in defense spending in 2023, which is the largest yearly increase in decades. After this year, our NATO Allies will have invested more than \$450 billion extra in defense since 2014.

175. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, do you believe that NATO allies must spend 2 percent of their GDP on defense spending?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes. At this year’s NATO Summit in Vilnius, Allies agreed to a renewed Defense Investment Pledge, making an enduring commitment to invest “at least 2 percent” of GDP annually on defense and “recognizing that more is needed urgently” to meet NATO’s requirements. We have made progress since 2014, but we still have more work to do across the Alliance.

AFGHANISTAN WITHDRAWAL

176. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, on August 30, 2023, the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) Majority Office requested a transcribed interview with you as part of the Committee’s investigation into the Afghanistan withdrawal. The Committee requested you to reach out to the Committee to schedule an interview by September 7, 2023. On September 8, 2023, HFAC Chairman Michael McCaul said that the State Department has yet to schedule the interview. Since then, have you scheduled the interview with HFAC?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Department of State informed HFAC, in writing, on September 7, 2023, that pursuant to its request of August 30, 2023, I had agreed to appear for a transcribed interview, subject only to mutually acceptable logistical arrange-

ments. I continue to be ready to make myself available when HFAC has agreed to a specific date and time.

WORK FROM HOME

177. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, remote work provides Federal agencies with an opportunity to reduce costs for taxpayers and increase the ability to recruit and retain talent for public service. However, such arrangements only work for taxpayers when telework does not (1) harm the agencies' ability to achieve their mission, (2) adversely impact the timely delivery of quality services, or (3) impede or impair the management of the Federal workforce and taxpayer money. Based upon information technology (IT) login information, office swipe-ins, and other measurable and observable factors, how many State and DOD employees spend the majority of their working hours in a region with a lower locality pay rate than where their designated primary workstation is located, but continue to receive the higher locality pay associated with the primary workstation?

Mr. CHOLLET. My duties as Counselor do not include any of these issues. Any information in this regard is controlled by the Department of State. Any inquiries in this should be addressed directly to the Department of State.

178. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, how much money could be saved by adjusting locality pay for teleworking employees who reside outside of the region in where their primary workstation is located to the true location from where they perform the majority of their work?

Mr. CHOLLET. My duties as Counselor do not include any of these issues. Any information in this regard is controlled by the Department of State. Any inquiries in this should be addressed directly to the Department of State.

179. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, has the State or Defense Department taken any action to readjust current locality pay or calculate the locality pay of new or existing hires accounting for the true geographical location from where each employee who teleworks spends the majority of their working hours, rather than the physical location of their position of record?

Mr. CHOLLET. My duties as Counselor do not include any of these issues. Any information in this regard is controlled by the Department of State. Any inquiries in this should be addressed directly to the Department of State.

180. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, what is the typical daily onsite attendance in the DOD and State office buildings as a proportion of its total workforce?

Mr. CHOLLET. My understanding is across all domestic offices State Department employees currently report to the office in-person, on average, 5 days per pay period.

181. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, has DOD or State issued any guidance, established incentives, or otherwise enticed its workforce to return to working from the office buildings, and if so, have these efforts proven successful?

Mr. CHOLLET. As I understand it, the State Department has been ramping up domestic onsite work steadily over the past 2 years, and currently, across all domestic offices Department employees currently report to the office in-person, on average, 5 days per pay period.

182. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, comparing the capacity of usable area to the actual in-office attendance, what is the utilization of building space?

Mr. CHOLLET. My duties as Counselor do not include any of these issues. Any information in this regard is controlled by the Department of State. Any inquiries in this should be addressed directly to the Department of State.

183. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, what is the monetary and environmental cost of maintaining underutilized space in terms of energy usage and emissions?

Mr. CHOLLET. My duties as Counselor do not include any of these issues. Any information in this regard is controlled by the Department of State. Any inquiries in this should be addressed directly to the Department of State.

184. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, what, if any, actions are being taken or planned to reduce underutilization of building and office space?

Mr. CHOLLET. My duties as Counselor do not include any of these issues. Any information in this regard is controlled by the Department of State. Any inquiries in this should be addressed directly to the Department of State.

185. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, how is telework impacting the delivery of services and response times by DOD or State?

Mr. CHOLLET. My duties as Counselor do not include any of these issues. Any information in this regard is controlled by the Department of State. Any inquiries in this should be addressed directly to the Department of State.

186. Senator ERNST. Mr. Chollet, have waiting lists or backlogs increased or decreased?

Mr. CHOLLET. My duties as Counselor do not include any of these issues. Any information in this regard is controlled by the Department of State. Any inquiries in this should be addressed directly to the Department of State.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

IRAN

187. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, you have previously touted the 2015 Iran nuclear deal as a significant accomplishment that validated President Obama's foreign policy approach. Would it be appropriate for the Biden administration to lift sanctions on Iran while Iran continues to target Americans for murder here in the United States?

Mr. CHOLLET. The U.S. Government continues to enforce our sanctions on Iran and pursue sanctions evaders, and regularly engage with other countries to strongly discourage them from taking steps that contravene sanctions on Iran. We also work closely with our allies and partners to constrain and deter Iran's destabilizing behavior with a wide range of diplomatic and economic tools. Regarding the threats to DOD personnel, I understand the Department takes the safety of all current and former personnel seriously and closely monitors threats against them.

188. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, during the hearing you stated the United States has recently achieved some level of deterrence against Iran as exhibited by the lack of Iranian attacks targeting U.S. military personnel in the Middle East. How many times has Iran or its proxies attacked U.S. Forces in the Middle East since 2011?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is my understanding since the drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq in 2011, Iran and its proxies have conducted at least 185 attacks against U.S. forces in the Middle East. The Department remains prepared to take necessary and proportionate military action to defend U.S. forces, as demonstrated by our strikes in Syria in March 2023. The President has been clear that he will not hesitate to defend U.S. forces. Regarding the threats to DOD personnel, I understand the Department takes the safety of all current and former personnel seriously and closely monitors threats against them.

189. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, how many times has the United States responded kinetically to attacks by Iran or its proxies on U.S. servicemembers in the Middle East?

Mr. CHOLLET. President Biden has directed four major strikes against Iran and its proxies in Iraq and Syria; in February 2021; June 2021; August 2022; and March 2023. Since our strikes in March 2023, there have not been any Iranian-aligned militia group attacks on our forces in Syria, highlighting the deterrent value of these actions. If confirmed, I will support continuing to take necessary and proportionate military action to defend U.S. forces and facilities from attack, or threat of attack.

190. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, during the Iraq War, the Iranian Quds Force supplied Sunni militias in Iraq with training, intelligence, and deadly Explosively Formed Penetrators (EFPs). How many American servicemembers was Iran responsible for wounding and killing during the war?

Mr. CHOLLET. U.S. Central Command assesses at least 603 U.S. personnel killed in Iraq were attributed to Iran-backed Shia militants during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) between 2003 and 2011. Of those, 448 U.S. personnel were killed by EFPs and other improvised explosive devices. I do not have an estimate for how many of the tens of thousands of U.S. personnel wounded during OIF could be attributed to Iran/Iran-backed Shia militants.

191. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, in 2020, Quasem Soleimani, the leader of the Quds Force and the orchestrator of dozens of attacks that killed scores of U.S. mili-

tary personnel in Iraq, was killed by a U.S. drone strike. Do you support this operation?

Mr. CHOLLET. Qasem Soleimani and his Qods Force were responsible for the deaths of hundreds of U.S. and coalition service members, and orchestrated several attacks in the months prior to his death that killed and wounded U.S. and Iraqi personnel. In executing the strike, the United States demonstrated that it will continue to take all necessary action to protect our people and our interests wherever they are around the world.

AFGHANISTAN

192. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, as the State Department's counselor, what was your role at the State Department in managing the withdrawal from Afghanistan?

Mr. CHOLLET. In addition to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary and other seventh-floor principals, I was in regular contact with Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad and his team regarding the ongoing negotiations for a political settlement and was consulted on policy matters, particularly those related to coordinating with allies and partners. I maintained contact with interagency counterparts at OSD, JCS, the intelligence community agencies, and the National Security Council staff.

193. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, when did State realize a non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) would be required in Afghanistan?

Mr. CHOLLET. It was not definitively clear that an Embassy presence could not be sustained until Taliban forces were on the outskirts of Kabul. Until then, there was a consensus among State Department leaders to continue to support discussions regarding a negotiated political settlement between leaders of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban. With the collapse of the Republic, focus shifted to executing a rapid and safe evacuation of American citizens and Afghan partners, working closely with our DOD colleagues.

194. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, was this before or after the administration decided to withdrawn from Bagram Air Base?

Mr. CHOLLET. The United States evacuated Bagram in July 2021, before the non-combatant evacuation operation was initiated.

195. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, when did State start contacting American citizens in Afghanistan about a possible evacuation?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Travel Advisory for Afghanistan already in effect strongly suggested U.S. citizens plan to leave Afghanistan as soon as possible. The State Department issued 19 security alerts warning U.S. citizens to leave Afghanistan between January 17, 2021 and August 14, 2021. The Department published a security alert on May 15, 2021, reminding U.S. citizens that on April 27, 2021, the Department had ordered the departure from U.S. Embassy Kabul of U.S. Government employees whose functions can be performed elsewhere due to increasing violence and threat reports in Kabul. From August 14 through August 31, State officials reached out directly to every American known to the U.S. Government, repeatedly and through multiple channels—making 55,000 phone calls and sending 33,000 e-mails during those 17 days alone—to help facilitate evacuations for those who wished to leave.

196. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, do you consider leaving American citizens and Afghan interpreters who worked with the U.S. military behind but evacuating 36,000 Afghans with no connection to the United States to be a success?

Mr. CHOLLET. From August 14 through August 31, State officials reached out directly to every American known to the U.S. Government, repeatedly and through multiple channels—making 55,000 phone calls and sending 33,000 e-mails during those 17 days alone—to help facilitate evacuations for those who wished to leave. No American, to my knowledge, was barred by U.S. forces from leaving Afghanistan, and no one was turned away because our coalition partners and NGO's were also utilizing the airport to evacuate the Afghans who worked for them. We made every effort to get those U.S. citizens who wanted to leave out of Afghanistan before and during the evacuation; some chose to stay despite our warnings and some have chosen to return since the withdrawal. Over 6,000 U.S. citizens were evacuated during the non-combatant evacuation operation, and we are continuing to assist Americans who have since decided to leave. President Biden made a promise to provide every American who wanted to leave the opportunity to do so, and he has kept that promise.

197. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, despite the fact that the Biden administration left Americans and Afghan partners behind in Afghanistan, you previously said you view the evacuation as a successful multinational effort. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley has called the evacuation a “strategic failure”. Do you agree with his assessment?

Mr. CHOLLET. I agree with the President’s assessment that no amount of time, money, or troops would have yielded a fundamentally different result in Afghanistan. The decision to withdraw all U.S. forces from Afghanistan has put us on stronger strategic footing vis-à-vis the People’s Republic of China and Russia and better positioned us to meet other pressing security commitments globally.

198. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, you have previously said no one could predict how fast the Afghan Government would fall, although publicly the Central Intelligence Agency warned of a rapid collapse of the Afghan Government in July 2021. Were you aware of any U.S. assessments that indicated the Afghan Government could quickly collapse in the summer of 2021?

Mr. CHOLLET. No. According to unclassified reports, the Intelligence Community assessed that such an outcome was not likely for six to 12 months after the withdrawal of U.S. forces. I am not aware of any assessments that placed the collapse of the Afghan government before the withdrawal of U.S. forces—which is what ultimately necessitated the non-combatant evacuation operation.

199. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, after the Afghanistan withdrawal you stated there were lessons to be learned. Specifically, what are those lessons?

Mr. CHOLLET. The State Department’s After Action Review (AAR) on Afghanistan highlights a number of lessons learned. It acknowledges, for example, that the State Department could have been better prepared for a worst-case scenario, including through the establishment of a red team capacity to challenge underlying assumptions. The Administration has also discussed how, as a lesson learned from the Afghanistan evacuation, we are now prioritizing earlier drawdowns of our personnel in capitals under threat. This lesson has already been put into practice in Ukraine, Ethiopia, Sudan, and most recently Niger.

The AAR processes that have taken place across multiple agencies provide good insights regarding the final chapter of the war in Afghanistan, but I believe it is also vital to look more broadly—across the entire 20 years of war—to examine the key decision points, assumptions, and constraints that led us to this outcome. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Afghanistan War Commission and other lesson-learning efforts.

200. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, do you commit to making the State Department’s classified After-Action Review (AAR) available to Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) members and appropriately cleared staff at least 72 hours before any Committee vote on your nomination?

Mr. CHOLLET. A publicly available summary of the AAR has been made available and can be found at <https://www.State.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/State-AAR-AFG.pdf>. I am committed to providing the Committee such information as it needs to consider my nomination.

Though I do not control access to the AAR, my understanding is that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has made this available for SASC members.

EXTREMISM IN THE MILITARY

201. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, you previously stated that you believe the Army is “a pretty bubba-oriented system,” and that criticism of President Obama’s foreign policy reflected “systemic racism”. Do you believe the U.S. military has a systematic racism problem?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do not.

202. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, do you believe, as your predecessor previously stated, that the officer promotion process is systemically racist?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do not. I believe it is critically important that we have diverse representation in leadership throughout the Armed Forces.

203. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, I have previously spoken about the reading list former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Michael Gilday distributed that contained several books focused on racism, politics, anti-racism, and other issues which had zero to do with warfighting and lethality. What should be the focus of books on a military reading list?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I would defer to the Chiefs of the Military Services regarding what material they select for their reading lists.

204. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, how many U.S. servicemembers were punished for extremist activity as defined by the Department of Defense since January 6, 2021?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do not have access to this information in my current role as Counselor to the Secretary of State.

205. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, what is the mission of the U.S. Department of Defense?

Mr. CHOLLET. The mission of the Department of Defense is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and ensure our Nation's security.

206. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, if you are confirmed, will you require reading lists for service chiefs to focus on lethality, history, heritage, and winning wars as service chief reading lists typically do?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I would defer to the Chiefs of the Military Services regarding what material they select for their reading lists.

IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

207. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, the Navy released its Climate Change Plan nearly 18 months before its 30-year shipbuilding plan. Is warfighting and shipbuilding more important to the mission of the Navy than climate change? Please answer "yes" or "no".

Mr. CHOLLET. Consistent with the NDS, I agree that to sustain and strengthen deterrence, the Department of Defense requires the design and development of a combat-credible U.S. military fit for advancing our highest defense priorities. The NDS also highlights climate change, among other transboundary threats, as a feature of the security environment that will increasingly place pressure on the Joint Force and the systems that support it. DOD's future force must therefore be lethal, sustainable, resilient, survivable, and agile and responsive—including to climate change impacts.

My understanding is that the time it takes to develop strategic and planning documents varies according to a range of factors, including complexity of data input and analysis and degree of internal and external coordination. It does not necessarily reflect prioritization.

208. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, during your confirmation hearing you dodged the previously mentioned question which was very disappointing. Please directly answer this question with a "yes" or "no" answer.

Mr. CHOLLET. My response is the same as to the previous question.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE

209. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, the Biden administration's approach to arming Ukraine has been marked by hesitancy, delays, and concerns about so-called "escalation" from the Russian side. A single instance of excessive caution is perhaps excusable. The administration has so far delayed the approval of much needed equipment to the Ukrainians, including HIMARS, ATACMS, cluster munitions, Patriot air defense missiles, Abrams tanks, Javelin anti-tank missiles, and F-16s. Do you believe this pattern of hesitancy has produced a negative impact on Ukraine's ability to defend itself?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe U.S. security assistance has been focused on getting Ukraine what it needs, when it needs it, to achieve successes on the battlefield. My understanding is that these decisions are ultimately based on a collective assessment of what Ukraine needs, while balancing U.S. readiness requirements, training, sustainability, and other factors. Over the past 19 months, U.S. security assistance has continually adapted to Ukraine's evolving battlefield requirements, and U.S.-provided training and equipment has been critical to Ukraine's ability to push back on Russian aggression. From providing Stinger missiles, Javelin anti-tank weapons, and loitering munitions early on, to artillery, long-range fires, and advanced armored capabilities as the fight moved to the South and the East, the Administration has been responsive to Ukraine's needs. Away from the frontlines, U.S.-provided air defense systems like NASAMS and Patriot have been essential to protecting Ukraine's civilian populations and critical infrastructure. U.S. security assistance has unequivocally played a critical role in Ukraine's successes and will continue to do so.

210. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, which administration official had the ultimate approval authority on the provision of weapon systems listed in the above question?

Mr. CHOLLET. These determinations generally fall within the authority of the President of the United States, which he may delegate.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE POLICIES

211. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, do you believe DOD paying for Active Duty servicemembers to get gender reassignment surgery, a procedure that can take months or years to heal before a servicemember is deployable, advances DOD's primary mission of warfighting and lethality?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe that our Service members should have access to the medically necessary health care they need to ensure their physical and mental health.

212. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, in October 2022 Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin issued a memo entitled "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Healthcare". Do you agree with the directives in this memo?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I will follow all DOD policies.

213. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, there is a strong argument that the "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Healthcare" memo violates the Hyde Amendment, a law established more than 40 years ago that prevents the Federal Government from using Federal funds to pay for abortion outside of the exceptions for rape, incest, or if the pregnancy is determined to endanger the woman's life. Do you agree that Secretary Austin's memo violates the Hyde Amendment?

Mr. CHOLLET. I am aware that in a published October 2022 legal opinion, the Department of Justice determined that DOD "may lawfully expend funds to pay for Service members and their dependents to travel to obtain abortions that DOD cannot itself perform due to statutory restrictions" and that "DOD may lawfully expend funds to pay for such travel pursuant to both its express statutory authorities and, independently, through the necessary expense doctrine." The Department of Justice also concluded that section 1093 of title 10, United States Code, "does not prohibit the use of funds to pay expenses, such as a per diem or travel expenses, that are incidental to the abortion."

214. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, do you believe a compromise position exists between the current policy as outlined in Secretary Austin's "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Healthcare" memo and the previous policy?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I will follow all DOD policies.

215. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, is it your position that there should be no changes to Secretary Austin's "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Healthcare" memo?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I will follow all DOD policies.

FOREIGN MILITARY SALES

216. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, the Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) on the SASC-reported Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA objected to deadlines for FMS processing included in section 1299K (1399K in the Senate-passed NDAA). These deadlines, both with regard to letters of request (LOR) for pricing and availability and LORs for offer and acceptance, are drawn from current Defense Security Cooperative Agency (DSCA) guidelines. Do you think these guidelines should be changed to better measure performance?

Mr. CHOLLET. I support DOD's ongoing commitment to continuous process improvement in the area of Foreign Military Sales, which represents a sensible path forward to reduce timelines, manage cost, and deliver capability to our allies and partners. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing and supporting these efforts moving forward.

With regard to specific guidelines, it appears that meeting the timelines and waiver requirements contained in the proposed legislation would likely require a substantial increase in manpower across both the security cooperation and acquisition communities, a cost that—by law—would be recouped from supplemental charges to allies and partners. This could potentially make the United States less competitive in its efforts to be the partner of choice for allies and partners.

217. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, the SAP objection to section 1299K cited a need to account for complexity and priority. The section already does this, using the same categories used by DSCA, allowing for 45, 100, and 150 days depending on

the level of complexity. DSCA's own metrics measure performance according to these categories. Should DSCA develop new categories to better sort complexity and account for the Department's performance?

Mr. CHOLLET. I support the DOD's ongoing commitment to continuous process improvement in Foreign Military Sales. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with DSCA to review these metrics and support their efforts moving forward.

218. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, the SAP objects to section 922 of the SASC-reported Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA transferring oversight responsibility of the Defense Technology Security Administration (DTSA) from the Under Secretary for Policy to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy. The SAP cites legal issues with this change, but presents no substantive objection. Recognizing that Congress can resolve problems presented by conflicting legal authorities, will you work with me to identify the legal changes necessary to address the conflict identified in the SAP?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Administration strongly opposes moving the Defense Technology Security Administration from the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy. Export controls and technology security are, per the Arms Export Control Act and the Export Control Reform Act, national security functions and support U.S. foreign policy objectives. These functions are not industrial base issues. OUSD(P) provides political-military/security cooperation perspectives on exports of military and dual-use technologies in direct support of the promote and protect objectives of the National Defense Strategy. DTSA works closely with A&S, R&E, the Services, as well as Policy components, in identifying critical and emerging technologies that should require U.S. Government review prior to being transferred to another country of national security concern, particularly to strategic competitors in order to protect the qualitative military superiority of the United States military. DTSA works closely with A&S/Industrial Base Policy in developing the Department's risk assessments of foreign acquisitions of U.S. businesses as part of the Treasury-led CFIUS process. At the same time, DTSA is deeply involved in facilitating security cooperation by working closely with Policy regional components and with allies and partners to ensure allies and partners have required legal and structural measures in place to protect sensitive U.S. military technology.

DTSA is responsible for ensuring that policies regarding transfers of defense and dual-use technologies are consistent with the National Defense Strategy and with protecting the qualitative military superiority of the United States military. This is accomplished through Department-wide policies, specific technology release approvals recommended by the Services, and through providing a national security position on export licenses coordinated with DOD by State and Commerce.

USD(P)'s responsibility is codified in 10 U.S. Code § 134(b)(3) "(3)Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary shall have responsibility for supervising and directing activities of the Department of Defense relating to export controls."

This is consistent with the overall responsibilities of the USD(P) to the Secretary to establish technology transfer policies for the Department. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy (10 U.S. Code § 138) is responsible for advice to the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (10 U.S. Code § 133b) on industrial base matters. The USD(A&S) has no responsibilities regarding export control or technology security policies.

219. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, industry complaints about DTSA's lack of speed and cutting-edge technological expertise indicate a need for stronger, more qualified oversight than the current structure, wherein DTSA reports directly to the Under Secretary for Policy. If the Assistant Secretary for Defense Industrial Base cannot provide effective alternative oversight, would you recommend DTSA report instead to a different office, for instance, the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering or Under Secretary for Acquisition and Sustainment?

Mr. CHOLLET. I understand that DTSA is providing cutting-edge technological expertise and works closely with counterparts with the DOD organizations with equities in specific transfers or policies, for example, the Services, the Office of the USD(R&E), the Office of the USD(A&S), DOD Labs, DARPA, Department of Energy, NSA, and others.

DTSA licensing timelines are determined by the Executive Order authority for Departments of State and Commerce. With National Security in mind, DTSA works within those timelines to ensure our technical U.S. military advantages remain intact.

The DTSA technical staff consists of senior engineers, scientists, patent holders, subject matter experts and licensing analysts who contribute to maintaining and promoting the U.S. military's advantages on the battlefield. Most of the technical analysts have advanced degrees, and approximately 15 percent have PhDs. In addition, the knowledge and expertise residing in DTSA influences and helps shape DOD's technology security policies. To accomplish the DTSA mission in a timely manner, DTSA scientists and engineers are experts on both domestic and foreign defense-related technology and capabilities. They are also highly proficient at applying their technical knowledge in a manner consistent with the U.S. Government's policy and regulatory framework, as well as a variety of multilateral forums concerned with technology security such as the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Additionally, DTSA's technical expertise is often called upon by the Department of Justice to be technical experts for criminal cases involving export controls. DTSA's Senior Technical Advisor works closely with other parts of the Department of Defense to identify the latest trends and innovations in critical and emerging technologies, keeping DTSA staff up to date with the latest technologies and continually evaluate their relevance and potential impact on the organization.

DTSA maintains an outstanding record in working with industry and U.S. Government stakeholders to reach decisions on exports. In the case of Ukraine, DTSA has demonstrated unprecedented, rapid-turn (less than 24 hours, sometimes less than 4 hours) ability to assess technology risk while providing Ukraine with the capabilities to fight against Russian aggressors. DTSA is appropriately placed under the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to perform the duties and responsibilities of the Department in protecting the military superiority of the U.S. warfighter while promoting defense cooperation through transfers of military and dual-use technologies to partners and allies.

DTSA operates and maintains the U.S. Government IT system and data base where all export license applications are staffed and adjudicated. Under ECR, USXPORTs was directed to be the system utilized by all agencies to expeditiously adjudicate and record decisions regarding export licenses, and if modernized to utilize current technologies regarding data analytics and automation, this would certainly assist U.S. industry.

220. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, what other new legal authorities do you believe would allow DTSA to move faster on technology release and licensing decisions?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe DTSA has sufficient legal authorities to make timely technology release and licensing decisions.

221. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, foreign partners—especially those facing the most serious security threats—are often prepared to assume more operational risk than America's own Armed Forces. Whether in technology release or sale of non-programs of record, how should the Department account for this difference in risk tolerance levels?

Mr. CHOLLET. I understand that our foreign partners are willing to take operational risks and include those risks in our analysis of proposed arms transfers. For example, if there is a high likelihood of battlefield loss of U.S.-provided technology, the U.S. Government's release approvals are predicated on ensuring that the compromise of the system and its embedded technology will not have an adverse impact on the U.S. qualitative military superiority. As the technological leader of the world in many areas, we must be vigilant in protecting those technologies that the U.S. warfighter needs to maintain superiority in the battlespace.

222. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, whether by law, regulation, or practice, what percentage change in price from LOA to contract do you think should trigger the need to amend an existing LOA?

Mr. CHOLLET. I support DOD's ongoing commitment to continuous process improvement in Foreign Military Sales. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with DSCA to review these metrics and support their efforts moving forward.

223. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, to your knowledge, what law, regulation, or policy bars a prime contractor from entering into an agreement with a manufacturer to begin the process of acquiring long-lead government-furnished equipment (GFE), including sensitive and closely controlled items such as communications security devices, military grade GPS [global positioning system], and anti-spoofing devices, on forecast, without reference to a specific LOR and prior to execution of any signed commercial contract or issuance of an LOA?

Mr. CHOLLET. I am not familiar with the specific details of the contracting and acquisition processes, particularly as it relates to agreements between a prime contractor and manufacturer. However, Section 30 of the Arms Export Control Act, 22 U.S.C. 2770, only authorizes the U.S. Government to sell a defense article or service to a commercial company to support that company's sale of an end item via a direct commercial sale and an export license to a foreign armed forces or an international organization. It is my understanding that it would be difficult for the U.S. Government to justify a Section 30 sale in the absence of any identifiable direct commercial sales end item requirement.

224. Mr. Chollet, the FMS pipeline is filled with \$19 billion in arms contracted by Taiwan and scheduled for delivery. In the meantime, deliveries of similar systems are being made to other foreign customers. Will you explore options for adjusting production and delivery schedules in ways that puts Taiwan ahead of all others—except Ukraine and Israel?

Mr. CHOLLET. I understand DOD is working closely with the U.S. defense industrial base, and will continue to do so, to support our partners with critical systems for their national defense. If confirmed, I will review how the DOD has prioritized Taiwan's Security Cooperation program to assess how new approaches can expeditiously deliver critical systems in line with our national defense strategy.

225. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, arms deliveries should not be determined by which defense contractors can best access and manipulate the FMS process. They should be prioritized according to America's strategic needs. How will you work to reconcile arms deliveries and strategic priorities?

Mr. CHOLLET. Security Cooperation programs are first and foremost a tool of national security and diplomacy, and decisions made to provide capabilities to our foreign partners are based on U.S. strategic priorities. DOD executes the FMS process in close partnership with the Department of State and works closely with industry to reconcile production and delivery timelines and align them with the U.S. National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy.

226. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, will you prioritize the next delivery of weapons to Taiwan under Presidential drawdown authority before the end of the 2023 calendar year?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I will continue to support the expeditious use of available authorities—matched with appropriations—to support Taiwan's self-defense in a manner that is consistent with long-standing U.S. policy.

227. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, will you schedule a robust delivery of weapons deliveries to Taiwan under Presidential drawdown authority?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I will continue to support the expeditious use of available authorities, including implementation of Presidential Drawdown Authority, for Taiwan. If confirmed, I will also continue to deepen the Department's work to provide Taiwan the capabilities critical for its self-defense through other mechanisms and authorities.

228. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, will you assess the advisability and feasibility of using the fund to make investment decisions for the Special Defense Acquisition Fund (SDAF) independent of the requirements of the United States Armed Forces and report your findings to the Committee in a timeframe that will allow us to incorporate them into the Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA cycle?

Mr. CHOLLET. Yes. The Department of Defense, in consultation with the Department of State, uses the SDAF to purchase equipment and materiel that our international partners are expected to urgently need in the future. The Fund enhances U.S. military readiness by reducing the need to divert equipment and materiel from DOD inventories. In accordance with Section 51 in the Arms Export Control Act, when making investment decisions, DOD prioritizes equipment that is an established acquisition objective for the U.S. Armed Forces when compatible with security assistance requirements.

CHINA/TAIWAN

229. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, over the last year, the administration has down-played its earlier sense of urgency around the prospects of Chinese military aggression aimed at Taiwan. To what do you attribute this change?

Mr. CHOLLET. The 2022 National Defense Strategy identified the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the Department of Defense's top pacing challenge, and the De-

partment has made it clear that it views the PRC as waging a significant pressure campaign against Taiwan involving military, diplomatic, and economic instruments. It is important that we maintain deterrence today, tomorrow, and in the future.

230. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, at a SASC hearing in 2021, I asked then INDOPACOM Commander Admiral Philip Davidson about when assessed a People's Liberation Army (PLA) invasion of Taiwan would occur. He replied that such an invasion "manifest within the next 6 years," around 2027. Do you agree with this timeline?

Mr. CHOLLET. In my view, an invasion of Taiwan by the People's Republic of China (PRC) is neither imminent nor inevitable. It is critical that we continue to strengthen deterrence through our efforts to support Taiwan's self-defense, maintain our own capacity to resist any use of force that jeopardizes the security of the people on Taiwan, and work with our allies and partners to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region. I believe the Department is clear-eyed about this challenge and working with urgency and confidence to meet it; if confirmed, I will support the Department's efforts to do more than ever to fulfill its commitments consistent with longstanding U.S. policy, including the Taiwan Relations Act.

231. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, should the "Davidson Window" be accounted for in the development of defense budgets, acquisition, global posture of U.S. Forces, and foreign military sales?

Mr. CHOLLET. I believe the breadth and pace of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) military modernization is a significant reason why the National Defense Strategy identifies the PRC as the Department of Defense's pacing challenge. It is also a significant reason why the President's budget requests have prioritized investments in the capabilities our military needs right now, as well as what we need to maintain deterrence in the future. I believe that the Department is doing more than ever to meet its pacing challenge; if confirmed, I will work to ensure that these efforts continue to receive the increased urgency, prioritization, resources, and attention they deserve.

232. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, would you support increased combined planning with Taiwan for the defense of the island and its territories as an integral part of deterrence?

Mr. CHOLLET. I support continuing our robust unofficial relationship with Taiwan, including the provision of defense articles and services. If confirmed, I will continue to uphold our One China policy, as enumerated in the Taiwan Relations Act, the Three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances. In accordance with our longstanding policy, the support that the U.S. Government provides Taiwan is commensurate with the threat posed by the People's Republic of China.

233. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, would you support increased cooperation between Taiwanese and U.S. defense industries, including joint production of weapons systems?

Mr. CHOLLET. This discussion with Taiwan has been ongoing for years, with U.S. industry capabilities and expertise serving as a backdrop for Taiwan's indigenous defense production priorities.

Joint production is primarily an industry discussion, with market forces driving investment and opportunities. The U.S. Government is involved to protect vital U.S. defense technology, access to technology, and data associated with certain programs—all roles that I would continue to support if confirmed.

234. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, how do you see the value of direct U.S.-China defense talks and military-to-military dialogs?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is my understanding that the Department of Defense is committed to maintaining open lines of communication with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to ensure competition does not veer into conflict. Unfortunately, the PLA has largely denied, canceled, and ignored recurring bilateral engagements and DOD requests for senior-level military-to-military communication. This refusal by the People's Republic of China to engage with the United States in military-to-military communication channels, combined with the PLA's increasingly coercive and risky operational behavior, raises the risk of an operational incident or miscalculation spiraling into crisis.

235. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, will you actively work with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific and beyond to gain clarity and commitments around what

they could provide in terms of military support in a Taiwan contingency and U.S.-led effort to defend the island and its territories?

Mr. CHOLLET. There is a growing chorus of countries around the world emphasizing the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. I understand that the Department of Defense is building historic momentum working with our allies and partners to support Taiwan and is seeing results. If confirmed, I will continue to actively work with allies and partners across the Indo-Pacific region to support Taiwan.

236. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, how do you see American interests in the South China Sea and the People's Republic of China (PRC) threat to them?

Mr. CHOLLET. The South China Sea is a vital global trade route. The United States, our allies and partners, and all nations have significant interest in the South China Sea remaining free and open, in accordance with international law. I understand that over the last decade, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has accelerated its efforts to assert control over the entirety of the South China Sea. It continues to expand its military and law enforcement presence, harass, or block the legitimate economic activities of other states, and interfere with the ability of other states to exercise navigational rights and freedoms under international law. If confirmed, I would work to ensure the United States supports our allies and partners as they seek to uphold their rights under international law, and that the United States continues to oppose PRC efforts to assert unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea.

237. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) is an effective budget tool to track efforts to deter Chinese aggression in the INDOPACOM AOR. Do you believe PDI has been effective in forcing DOD to align resources against the problems the INDOPACOM commander has identified?

Mr. CHOLLET. I understand the Department of Defense is prioritizing the PRC as its top pacing challenge and that significant DOD investments and efforts are focused on this threat and strengthening Indo-Pacific deterrence. I also understand the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) is a key part of these endeavors, capturing the Department's efforts and investments that strengthen regional deterrence. I further understand that DOD is focused on moving and sustaining its forces farther forward, west of the International Date Line, and making its force posture more mobile, distributed, resilient, and lethal.

238. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, it has been 8 months since the Chinese spy balloon was shot down off the coast of South Carolina. Since then, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), in partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other Intelligence Community (IC) agencies, has been conducting an investigation on the military-equipment in the spy balloon. When will DOD provide a briefing on the findings of the investigation to Congress?

Mr. CHOLLET. Although the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy is not responsible for this investigation, it is my understanding that the Intelligence Community has shared its preliminary analysis of the high-altitude balloon's capabilities to the congressional intelligence committees. I will have to refer you to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and I have referred your question to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security to arrange an update for you on the status of the IC analysis.

239. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, in my "Why Taiwan Matters Speech" I provided to you during our office call describes three levels of deterrence. Please comment on your view on the framework of deterrence and how to implement it.

Mr. CHOLLET. I appreciate that your framework takes a whole of U.S. Government approach to maintaining cross-strait peace and stability. The Taiwan Relations Act, the Three Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances—key elements of the U.S. One China policy—are inherently whole-of-government approaches that have enabled multiple administrations and Congresses to support Taiwan and deter the People's Republic of China. I believe that current Department actions are enhancing Taiwan's defensive capability, maintaining the United States' military and economic strength as a deterrent, and supporting allies and partners who share our interests in maintaining cross-strait peace and stability.

240. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, please describe how to implement the three levels of deterrence as detailed in my "Why Taiwan Matters" speech.

Mr. CHOLLET. Current U.S. policy provides the U.S. Government with the means to support Taiwan's defense capabilities, leverage the support of allies and partners,

and bolster U.S. strength—both military and economic—to counter the People’s Republic of China if it chooses to unilaterally change the cross-strait status quo.

241. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, as detailed in my “Why Taiwan Matters” speech, there are three levels of deterrence. We need to be actively leading on all three. The first is getting Taiwan the weapons it needs to effectively contribute to its own defense against PRC military action. The second is maintaining our own capacity to help defend Taiwan. We have challenges dealing with these two levels. But the level that is proving the most difficult to build consensus around is the third and probably most effective—signaling devastating economic and financial sanctions in the event Beijing resorts to use of force, as required by my STAND with Taiwan Act. Will you work within the administration to support development of such a robust package of sanctions in advance of any PRC use of force on Taiwan?

Mr. CHOLLET. I understand that the Department of Defense works closely with its interagency colleagues, including those at the Departments of the Treasury, Commerce, and State, to ensure that the U.S. Government effectively leverages our financial and economic tools to protect national security. If confirmed, I would prioritize and continue that close collaboration.

ALASKA AND THE ARCTIC

242. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, Alaska’s location at the seams of U.S. European Command (EUCOM), INDOPACOM, and U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) makes it the most strategic location in the world for power projection into these AORs. Please describe how you see Alaska’s role in projecting American power into these three combatant command AORs.

Mr. CHOLLET. Alaska’s strategic location is incredibly important for the Joint Force’s ability to project power across all three of these Combatant Commands’ areas of responsibility (AORs). Its location places it closer to these AORs than many places in the Lower 48, meaning that U.S. forces can more quickly reach these regions from Alaska. This is one of the reasons that Alaska is home to the largest concentration of fifth-generation airpower anywhere in the world at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and Eielson Air Force Base. The Alaska Air National Guard supports this capability through the 168th Air Wing, which is the only Arctic region refueling unit for Pacific Air Forces. Alaska is, therefore, key to ensuring a globally deployable Joint Force. If confirmed, I would ensure that the Department regularly reviews its force posture and force management decisions pertaining to Alaska cognizant of its importance to DOD operations around the world.

243. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, over the last year, the entire Nation has seen how important Air Force assets in Alaska are to our Homeland defense, particularly during the Chinese spy balloon and Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) incidents. Active Duty and Air National Guard units detected, tracked, and shot down UAPs during the dead of winter in bad weather with almost no daylight. The 100 5th generation fighters in Alaska—F-22s and F-35s—execute the Homeland defense mission with support from E-3s and KC-135s. These aircraft are all under the commander of INDOPACOM and can be expected to deploy forward in the event of a conflict with the PRC. In your opinion, should the command and control relationship of these aircraft in Alaska be changed to ensure they are available for Homeland defense?

Mr. CHOLLET. From my vantage point, command and control relationships between USNORTHCOM and USINDOPACOM, while complex, are working and ensure Alaska-based 5th generation fighters and enablers are used effectively in the homeland defense mission. Although these forces are assigned to USINDOPACOM, the Department of Defense effectively balances their use to meet NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and USINDOPACOM missions. If confirmed, I will have the opportunity to review command and control relationships and identify opportunities for improvement.

244. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, if you do not believe that the command and control relationship of these aircraft in Alaska should be changed to ensure they are available for Homeland defense, how should U.S. Forces conduct Homeland defense in Alaska during a conflict with the PRC?

Mr. CHOLLET. From my perspective, current command and control relationships have proven adequate to carry out the Department’s missions globally. However, as I understand things, the Secretary of Defense, with the advice of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and the applicable Secretaries of the Military Departments, may make changes he determines are

necessary to adapt to emerging threats and crises. I look forward to reviewing this issue further, if confirmed.

245. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, in 2020 the Air Force released its first Arctic strategy which the Army and Navy followed with their own approximately 1 year later. Each of these strategies seek to identify how the respective branch can regain Arctic dominance. Are you familiar with each of the Service Arctic strategies?

Mr. CHOLLET. I am familiar with all of the Services' Arctic strategies, and I understand the Department of Defense is currently updating its Department-wide Arctic strategy, the last version of which dates from 2019. I understand this updated strategy will take into account the significant changes in the Arctic security environment that have occurred over the past few years and provide DOD Components, including the Combatant Commands, with refreshed guidance that will nest under the 2022 National Defense Strategy and the National Strategy for the Arctic Region.

246. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, Russia has welcomed Chinese investment in ports and energy projects along the Northern Sea Route. Chinese financiers provided up to 60 percent of the capital for Russia's Yamal liquefied natural gas project terminating in the port city of Sabetta on Russia's northern coast. The project is considered the "crown jewel" of Russia's investments in the Northern Sea Route and could produce up to 926 billion cubic meters of liquefied natural gas from the South Tambey field. In the last year, the PRC has become the largest importer of Russia oil. Last month, the PRC imported a record high quantity of oil from Russia's Arctic. Do you see Russia and China continuing to deepen ties, especially Russian energy exports to China and Chinese investment in port and energy infrastructure projects along the Northern Sea Route?

Mr. CHOLLET. The People's Republic of China's (PRC) approach to the Arctic has expanded and created new opportunities for engagement between the PRC and Russia. If confirmed, I would work to ensure neither country's activities in the Arctic threaten freedom of navigation, U.S. sovereignty, or U.S. economic interests.

247. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, how might this economic development impact our security interests in Europe and the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. CHOLLET. People's Republic of China (PRC) support to Russia's economy, in the Arctic and elsewhere, negatively impacts the ability of Western nations to hold Russia to account for its aggression in Ukraine. More broadly, the PRC and Russia's increased alignment, military modernization, desire to undermine the international rules-based order, and use of common coercive strategies against U.S. allies and partners in Europe and Asia are of significant concern to the United States, and to like-minded allies in Europe and the Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department's efforts to address the PRC as its top pacing challenge, with Russia as an acute threat.

248. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chollet, according to unclassified reporting, as of October 1, 2023, Russia may be preparing to test the Burevestnik nuclear-powered cruise missile with a range of up to 14,000 miles in the vicinity of Novaya Zemlya, an island archipelago in the Arctic region. Please describe the importance of the Arctic to Russia's military advancements.

Mr. CHOLLET. The Arctic plays a critical role in Russia's military calculations. Russia's strategic second-strike capabilities are based in the Arctic on the Kola Peninsula. Over the past decade, Russia has invested significantly in renovating Soviet-era bases and new infrastructure across the Russian Arctic. The Arctic has also been an important weapons-testing ground for Russia historically, given its vast area and sparse population. I understand that the Department monitors closely Russia's development of new or enhanced capabilities that could threaten the national security of the United States, our allies, and partners, including in or through the Arctic region.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOMMY TUBERVILLE

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IN ALABAMA

249. Senator TUBERVILLE. Mr. Chollet, between 2018 and 2020, Alabama experienced 4 times the increase in fentanyl deaths (121 to 428). Between 2020 and 2022 that number doubled to 835. We know that a lot of this fentanyl is coming across our southern border which has essentially been erased by this administration. We also know that once these illegal immigrants come into our country, U.S. Immigra-

tion and Customs Enforcement (ICE) cannot effectively track these individuals in our own country.

Since President Biden took office and refused to secure the border, over 6 million illegal immigrants have been apprehended by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and a majority of whom, have been released into the United States. Since March 2021, CBP has released more than 127,000 illegal immigrants who were later arrested in the United States. This includes 5,500 criminal arrests.

You've previously stated that the security threat at the border is "preposterous and not supported by the evidence". Can you explain to me how 4 times the amount of fentanyl deaths in my State and how over 127,000 illegal immigrant's arrests is "not supported by the evidence" to deem the situation at the southern border as a disaster?

Mr. CHOLLET. The loss of so many lives due to fentanyl in our Nation and across the world is a terrible tragedy. It is my understanding that, while illicit drug trafficking and immigration enforcement are law enforcement matters that are best be addressed law enforcement agencies, the Department of Defense actively supports our Nation's whole-of-government efforts to combat the illicit trafficking of fentanyl.

250. Senator TUBERVILLE. Mr. Chollet, in May, the administration sent 1,500 troops to the border. In August, they pulled 1,100 troops from the border. A few days ago, they sent 800 back. It almost sounds like they may be confused as to whether or not there is anything noteworthy happening out there. Clearly, if National Guard is assisting at the border, DOD has a role to play in border management.

As the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, how would you advise the Secretary of Defense on what further actions DOD should do when... not if... this trajectory of illegal immigrants continues to rapidly increase due to this administration's refusal to handle the situation?

Mr. CHOLLET. It is my understanding that DOD support is largely driven by DHS requests for assistance. I am not aware of a DOD authority to take independent border security actions at the southwest border.

If confirmed, I would, consistent with the law and with the military advice of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, provide the Secretary of Defense with my best advice based on the specific circumstances at the southwest border. Should DOD receive a DHS request for assistance, I would consider—again, with the advice of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—the specific capabilities, resources, or tasks requested, taking into account the availability of DOD capabilities, resources, and personnel, and weigh the potential risks to military personnel, readiness, and DOD's ability to respond to potential contingencies.

If confirmed, I would also work closely with DHS in order to advise the Secretary of Defense on how DOD can most appropriately help DHS build the capability and capacity DHS needs to carry out its statutory border security mission.

AFGHANISTAN WITHDRAWAL

251. Senator TUBERVILLE. Mr. Chollet, I want to touch on what several of my colleagues have mentioned, the botched withdrawal from Afghanistan. In 2021, President Biden determined the previously selected date of May 1st was not viable for a complete withdrawal of military forces from Afghanistan. Instead, he chose a date 5 months later. This gave the administration 5 months to prepare for the withdrawal. Despite having these 5 months to prepare, the implementation of the action was extraordinarily chaotic and sorrowfully fatal.

You've previously come out and stated that you believe the botched withdrawal from Afghanistan was a successful multinational effort. Looking back at lessons learned, unfortunately lessons learned the hard way, how would you now rate the botched withdrawal on a scale from 1 to 10. One being absolutely devastating, incredible tragic and ill-planned, and 10 being you wouldn't change a single thing and everything went according to plan?

Mr. CHOLLET. I'm not able to provide a number. What I can say is that no operation is ever perfect. A NEO, in particular, is one of the highest risk operations our military personnel are asked to undertake; they are rare, they are rapid, and they are conducted as a last resort, often in very dangerous circumstances. In this case, the Taliban had entered Kabul, our partner forces had collapsed, and there was an active and lethal terrorist threat on the ground. The fact that we were able to execute the largest airlift in U.S. history in such a dangerous and fluid environment speaks to the extraordinary skill and bravery of our military personnel and diplomats on the ground.

I know the Administration is committed to learning the lessons from Afghanistan, including the evacuation operation. We need to understand what happened—what went right and what went wrong—in the final days, weeks, and months of the war in Afghanistan. It is incumbent upon us to ask tough questions. Learning the lessons of two decades of conflict is critically important, even though it may be difficult at times. This is why both State and DOD conducted extensive and deliberate After Action Reviews of the withdrawal—including going through hundreds of interviews and thousands of documents—to try to capture ground truth and identify lessons that can be incorporated going forward. I believe it is also vital to look more broadly—across the entire 20 years of war—to examine the key decision points, assumptions, and constraints that led us to this outcome. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Afghanistan War Commission and other lesson-learning efforts.

252. Senator TUBERVILLE. Mr. Chollet, do you feel the President should have allotted more time for the withdrawal or done more during the 5 months?

Mr. CHOLLET. The State Department's planning was extensive but, as stated in the After Action Reviews, should have included more red teaming, worst-case scenarios, and challenging of core assumptions. We were surprised, for example, by how quickly more than 300,000 trained and equipped Afghan National Defense and Security Forces melted away, that President Ghani would flee as quickly as he did, and that the Taliban would be able to capture all provincial capitals including Kabul in 9 days, among other uncomfortable truths. The withdrawal timeline was sound; the unforeseen circumstances necessitating the NEO forced us to change our calculations.

253. Senator TUBERVILLE. Mr. Chollet, what sort of policy would you recommend to ensure a similar situation does not reoccur?

Mr. CHOLLET. We must learn the lessons of America's longest war. The State and DOD AARs are one piece of that effort, but far from the only one. DOD has created the Office of Special Coordinator for Afghanistan that will report directly to me, if confirmed. The elevation of this office within the OSD(Policy) organization reflects the importance the Department places on continuing to learn the lessons of the war in Afghanistan; being fully responsive and available to the Afghanistan War Commission; and serving as faithful stewards of the legacies of the thousands of servicemembers and civilians who dedicated their careers and lives to this war. I share these priorities. I know that the Department is actively working with Congress to appropriately respond to its oversight inquiries related to Afghanistan and has produced several thousand pages of documents already. If confirmed, I will support these efforts and work to facilitate Congress's ability to get the information it needs to perform its oversight responsibilities.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

254. Senator TUBERVILLE. Mr. Chollet, I'm curious about your opinion on "systemic racism" within various governmental organizations. You have previously stated that any criticisms of President Obama's foreign policy reflected "systemic racism". How do you define systemic racism?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Cambridge Dictionary defines systemic racism as "the policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization, and that result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race."

255. Senator TUBERVILLE. Mr. Chollet, do you feel DOD is systemically racist? If so, what policy changes would you advise?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do not believe that DOD is systemically racist.

256. Senator TUBERVILLE. Mr. Chollet, please elaborate how a difference of opinion with regard to a person's foreign policy beliefs reflects "systemic racism"?

Mr. CHOLLET. I do not believe that a difference of opinion with regard to a person's foreign policy beliefs reflects systemic racism.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

ABRAHAM ACCORDS

257. Senator BUDD. Mr. Chollet, how would an expansion of the Abraham Accords advance U.S. national security interests in the Middle East?

Mr. CHOLLET. The United States strongly supports the Abraham Accords and normalization agreements between Israel and Arab countries. These historic agreements have made Israel and its neighbors more secure and created new opportunities to strengthen cooperation across the region. The United States is implementing our strategy to advance opportunities to promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Israel, Arab states, and other relevant countries across a variety of fields. This effort will increase stability and prosperity across the Middle East and the broader region by enhancing regional economic integration, security cooperation, and cultural understanding among U.S. partners. These new regional partnerships also afford the opportunity to develop globally transformative partnerships with Israel at the core.

258. Senator BUDD. Mr. Chollet, what role does the Abraham Accords play in countering Russia and China's influence in the Middle East and how could this be strengthened?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Middle East is a key theater for strategic competition. The PRC has demonstrated its intent to bolster its standing in the Middle East, and Russia continues to destabilize the region through its military activities in Syria and its cooperation with Iran. The United States retains many advantages, including its economic power, democratic values, military might and global alliances, and diplomatic capacity. Through the Abraham Accords, the United States is implementing our strategy to advance opportunities to promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Israel, Arab states, and other relevant countries across a variety of fields. This effort will increase stability and prosperity across the Middle East and the broader region by enhancing regional economic integration, security cooperation, and cultural understanding among U.S. partners. These new regional partnerships also afford the opportunity to develop globally transformative partnerships.

259. Senator BUDD. Mr. Chollet, how do you view the potential for Saudi Arabia to normalize relations with Israel and join the Abraham Accords?

Mr. CHOLLET. We continue our support for Arab states' full normalization with Israel, including Saudi Arabia, and continue to talk to our regional partners about how more progress can be made. This is consistent with the National Defense Strategy's focus on collaboration with a growing network of U.S. allies and partners to advance shared objectives and deter aggression. We remain committed to working closely with Israel to jointly address the many challenges and opportunities facing Israel and the Middle East region, including countering threats from Iran. Normalization with Israel advances U.S. foreign policy goals for a more peaceful, secure, prosperous, integrated, and stable Middle East region.

GLOBAL POSTURE REVIEW

260. Senator BUDD. Mr. Chollet, Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall spoke recently about combatant commands' "insatiable demand" for forces, and the impact that demand has had on our ability to implement the 2022 National Defense Strategy. Do you share Secretary Kendall's concern, and if so, how will you manage competing demands for forces from combatant commands, consistent with the priorities laid out in the 2022 National Defense Strategy?

Mr. CHOLLET. Implementing the 2022 National Defense Strategy is the highest priority of the Department of Defense and will be my north star if confirmed. If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff, Services, Combatant Commands, and other Office of the Secretary of Defense Components to ensure that we are adequately balancing Combatant Commander's operational requirements and global risks and tradeoffs with the priorities laid out in the National Defense Strategy.

261. Senator BUDD. Mr. Chollet, according to the unclassified summary, the Department of Defense's 2021 Global Posture Review recommended minimal changes to America's global posture, in effect validating how U.S. Forces are already positioned around the world. This surprised many analysts who expected the Department to identify opportunities to shift resources toward the Indo-Pacific and away from lower-priority theaters, consistent with the 2022 National Defense Strategy's prioritization of China. Are you satisfied with the results of the 2021 Global Posture Review and why or why not?

Mr. CHOLLET. I understand the Department of Defense has adjusted its global force posture to align with the 2022 National Defense Strategy's priorities in an orderly and deliberate manner, while still ensuring sufficient posture in other regions of the world that continue to require the United States' attention. If confirmed, I

will continue to ensure that DOD adjusts its global posture, if needed, and is prioritizing resources for the Indo-Pacific region.

262. Senator BUDD. Mr. Chollet, if you have not yet reviewed the 2021 Global Posture Review, do you commit to reviewing that document; preparing a written assessment of the review's findings, recommendations, and potential shortfalls; and delivering such assessment to my office and the Committee on Armed Services within 60 days of your confirmation?

Mr. CHOLLET. I understand that OSD Policy provides a "Global Defense Posture" report to Congress on an annual basis and includes within it a review of global posture adjustments for the reporting period. I commit to reviewing the 2021 Global Posture Review to baseline my understanding of the review's findings, recommendations, and potential shortfalls.

ASSAULT BREAKER II

263. Senator BUDD. Mr. Chollet, Admiral John Aquilino, Commander of Indo-Pacific Command, recently stated publicly that his metric of success is the ability to maintain custody of and prosecute 1,000 targets within a 24-hour period. If confirmed, do you commit to ensuring that the Department fully resources the programs of record, including critical munitions and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms across the Military Services, necessary to accomplish that?

Mr. CHOLLET. The National Defense Strategy directs the Department to act urgently to sustain and strengthen U.S. deterrence, with the People's Republic of China as the Department's pacing challenge. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that the Department has the necessary resources to implement that strategy, which includes fully resourcing critical program across the Military Services. If confirmed, I will prioritize getting briefed on the Assault Breaker II program to better understand the underlying programs of record necessary to accomplish that concept and commit to advocating for full resources for Assault Breaker II programs aligned to our National Defense Strategy.

264. Senator BUDD. Mr. Chollet, if confirmed, do you commit to informing Congress within 60 days if intelligence resources needed to maintain custody of those 1,000 targets are shifted away from the Indo-Pacific or otherwise redirected in a manner that limits U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and its partners' abilities to develop and maintain custody of those targets?

Mr. CHOLLET. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that the Department has the necessary resources to implement its National Defense Strategy, which includes the underlying intelligence resources. If confirmed, I will prioritize getting briefed on the Assault Breaker II program to better understand the required intelligence resources to accomplish that concept and commit to fully resourcing intelligence requirements are aligned to our National Defense Strategy.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ERIC SCHMITT

CENSORSHIP AT STATE DEPARTMENT

265. Senator SCHMITT. Mr. Chollet, do you believe the State Department should have any role whatsoever in identifying and targeting Americans' speech for censorship here in the United States?

Mr. CHOLLET. The Department of State does not—and should not—censor speech of U.S. persons that is protected by the First Amendment.

ELECTION INTEGRITY PARTNERSHIP

266. Senator SCHMITT. Mr. Chollet, [the below is paraphrased from page 19 of a 25 September 2023 letter from the State of Louisiana to the Supreme Court Re: Murthy, et al. v. Missouri, et al., No. 23A243—Panel Rehearing Granted by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.] Leah Bray, the GEC's [Global Engagement Center] Deputy Coordinator, attested that "[d]uring the 2020 U.S. election cycle, the GEC discovered certain posts and narratives on social media and digital media that originated from, were amplified by, or likely to be amplified by foreign malign influence actors. . . [T]he GEC flagged these posts and narratives for the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP) on approximately 21 occasions." GEC provided "tickets" or information for EIP to censor speech. That means that the State Department submitted entire "narratives" of protected speech by Americans—including speech that was merely "likely" to be amplified by foreign actors, on the GEC's view—to the EIP

on 21 occasions. And a single “narrative” can encompass hundreds of thousands of posts.

As a senior official in the State Department while this was taking place, how can you justify these actions by the State Department?

Mr. CHOLLET. My understanding is that this case remains in active litigation and therefore I cannot comment upon it.

CENSORSHIP AT DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

267. Senator SCHMITT. Mr. Chollet, I am concerned about the Department of Defense’s participation in the pseudoscientific efforts to identify and filter “misinformation” and “disinformation” by using firms like NewsGuard and PeakMetrics in ways that infringe upon the fundamental rights of Americans. If confirmed, how would you use your position and influence to ensure that the rights of Americans to speak freely and to access information are not impacted by the work of the Department of Defense?

Mr. CHOLLET. I understand that the Department of Defense focuses its counter disinformation efforts on foreign audiences and takes every available measure to ensure that information provided to domestic audiences is truthful. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department leverages its capabilities to effectively compete in the information environment against foreign actors in the protection of national interests while continuing to provide the American public, Congress, and the news media timely and accurate information, all of which is critical to the Department’s ongoing efforts to implement the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed I will ensure that the Department continues to not censor speech of U.S. persons that is protected by the First Amendment.

[The nomination reference of Honorable Derek H. Chollet follows:]

NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT

PN869

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
July 25, 2023.

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

Derek H. Chollet, of Nebraska, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, vice Colin Hackett Kahl, resigned.

_____, 2023.
(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 Honorable Derek H. Chollet, which was transmitted to the Committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

Derek Hall Chollet

EDUCATION:

Cornell University, 1989-1993 (BA May 1993)

Columbia University, 1995-1998 (PhD Candidate; no degree, passed comprehensive and oral exams in 1998)

EMPLOYMENT RECORD:

U.S. Department of State, Counselor of the Department, January 2021-present

Biden-Harris Presidential Transition Team, State Department Agency Review Team, November 2020-January 2021

The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Washington, DC, Executive Vice President and Senior Adviser for Security and Defense Policy, 2015-January 2021 (promoted from Counselor, 2016)

The Johns Hopkins University, Kissinger Center for Global Affairs, Visiting Fellow, 2020

University of Pennsylvania, Perry World House, Visiting Fellow, 2018-January 2021

Beacon Global Strategies, Washington, DC, Adviser, 2015-January 2021 (Member of Board of Advisers, 2015-2016)

U.S. Department of Defense, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, May 2012- January 2015.

The White House, National Security Council Staff, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Strategic Planning, February 2011-May 2012

U.S. State Department, Policy Planning Staff, Principal Deputy Director, February 2009-February 2011

Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team, NSC Agency Review Team, November 2008-Jan 2009

The Center for a New American Security, Senior Fellow, January-2007-January 2009

Georgetown University, Security Studies Program, Adjunct Associate Professor, January 2006-January 2009

The George Washington University, Elliot School of International Affairs, Adjunct Professor, 2005-2008

The Brookings Institution, Global Economy and Development Program, Fellow, 2007-2008

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, International Security Program, Fellow, January 2005-January 2007

The Center for Promise and Opportunity, Policy Consultant, 2005-2007

Kerry-Edwards 2004, National Security Advisor to Vice Presidential Candidate, July 2004-November 2004

U.S. Senate, U.S. Senator John Edwards (D-NC), Foreign Policy Advisor, August 2002-July 2004/November 2004-January 2005

The American Academy in Berlin (Germany), Bosch Public Policy Fellow, January 2002-June 2002

The Office of Strobe Talbott, Research Assistant/Consultant, February 2001-December 2001

The Office of Richard Holbrooke, Research Assistant/Consultant, February 2001-December 2001

U.S. Mission to the United Nations and Office of the Deputy Secretary of State Chief Speechwriter and Special Advisor, February 1999-February 2001

Columbia University, Department of Political Science, Teaching Assistant, 1996-1998

The Office of Richard Holbrooke, Research Assistant/Consultant, 1997-1998

The Office of Warren Christopher, Research Assistant/Consultant, 1997-1998

U.S. State Department, Consultant to Bureau of Public Affairs, June 1996-February 1997

The Office of James A. Baker, III, Research Assistant, May 1993-July 1995

HONORS AND AWARDS:

Secretary of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service, U.S. Department of Defense, 2015

Latvia Minister of Defense Medal of Honorary Recognition, 2015

Lithuania Minister of Defense Medal of Merit, 2015

Outstanding Alumnus, Lincoln Southeast High School, 2014

Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service, U.S. Department of Defense, 2013

Superior Honor Award, U.S. Department of State, 2010

Meritorious Honor Award, U.S. Department of State, 2001

Presidential Fellowship, Columbia University, 1995-1998

Frederick Marcham Fellowship, Cornell University, 1993

John F. Kennedy Scholarship, Cornell University, 1993

Harry S Truman Scholarship, 1992

[The Committee on Armed Services requires all individuals nominated from civilian life by the President to positions requiring the advice and consent of the Senate to complete a form that details the biographical, financial, and other information of the nominee. The form executed by Honorable Derek H. Chollet in connection with his nomination follows:]

118th CONGRESS, 2023 -- 2024
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
ROOM SR 228
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510 6050
(202) 224 3871

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES QUESTIONNAIRE
INFORMATION REQUESTED OF CIVILIAN NOMINEES

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE: Answer all questions and provide all requested information. If more space is needed, attach an additional sheet of paper to the Questionnaire and cite the part of the Questionnaire and the question number (e.g., A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies. Unless otherwise required, an answer of "yes", "no", or "not applicable" is appropriate.

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART A

NOTE: Information furnished in this part of the Questionnaire will be made available in Committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearing, if any, and will be entered in the hearing record, also available to the public.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC

1. Name (Include any former names you have used):
Derek Hall Chollet
2. Position to which nominated:
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USDP)
3. Date of nomination:
July 25, 2023
4. Education (List names of secondary and higher education institution attended, type of school [vocational, technical, trade school, college, university, military college, correspondence, distance, extension, and on-

line], dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted):

Cornell University, 1989-1993 (BA May 1993)

Columbia University 1995-1998 (PhD Candidate; no degree, passed comprehensive and oral exams in 1998)

5. Employment record (List all jobs held since college, or in the last 10 years, whichever is less, including the title or description of the job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment. If the employment activity was military duty, show each change of military duty station as a separate period of employment):

U.S. Department of State, Counselor of the Department, January 2021-present

Biden-Harris Presidential Transition Team, State Department Agency Review Team, November 2020-January 2021

The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Washington, DC, Executive Vice President and Senior Adviser for Security and Defense Policy, 2015-January 2021 (promoted from Counselor, 2016)

The Johns Hopkins University, Kissinger Center for Global Affairs, Visiting Fellow, 2020

University of Pennsylvania, Perry World House, Visiting Fellow, 2018-January 2021

Beacon Global Strategies, Washington, DC, Adviser, 2015-January 2021 (Member of Board of Advisers, 2015-2016)

U.S. Department of Defense, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, 2012-2015.

6. Government experience (List any advisory, consultative, honorary, and other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed in response to question 5, above):

The White House, National Security Council Staff
Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Strategic Planning, February 2011-May 2012

U.S. State Department, Policy Planning Staff, Principal Deputy Director, February 2009-2011

Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team, NSC Agency Review Team, Nov 2008-Jan 2009

U.S. Senate, U.S. Senator John Edwards (D-NC), Foreign Policy Advisor, August 2002-July 2004

U.S. Mission to the United Nations and Office of the Deputy Secretary of State Chief Speechwriter and Special Advisor, February 1999-2001

U.S. State Department, Consultant to Bureau of Public Affairs, June 1996-February 1997

7. **Business relationships (List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, and of any educational or other institution):**

NONE

8. **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):**

Council of Foreign Relations, Member

9. **Political affiliations and activities:**

- a. If you have ever been a candidate for, or have been elected or appointed to a political office, list the name of the office(s); whether you were a candidate/elected/appointed; the year(s) during which you were a candidate, or in which the election was held or the appointment was made; and the term of office (if applicable): NO

- b. List all memberships and offices held in, and services rendered to, all political parties or election committees during the last 5 years: NONE

- c. Itemize all individual political contributions of \$100 or more to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity during the past 5 years. List each individual

contribution (not the total amount contributed to the person or entity) over this period: SEE ATTACHMENT

10. Honors and awards (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements):

Secretary of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service,
U.S. Department of Defense, 2015
Latvia Minister of Defense Medal of Honorary Recognition, 2015
Lithuania Minister of Defense Medal of Merit, 2015
Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service,
U.S. Department of Defense, 2013
Superior Honor Award, U.S. Department of State, 2010
Meritorious Honor Award, U.S. Department of State, 2001
Presidential Fellowship, Columbia University, 1995-1998
Frederick Marcham Fellowship, Cornell University, 1993
John F. Kennedy Scholarship, Cornell University, 1993
Harry S Truman Scholarship, 1992

11. Published writings (List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, or other published materials that you have written or for which you served as co-author or editor, including articles and blogs published on the internet): SEE ATTACHED
12. Speeches (Provide the Committee with two copies of any formal speeches you have delivered during the last 5 years—of which you have copies—in which you addressed matters relevant to the position to which you have been nominated). N/A

COMMITMENTS IN FURTHERANCE OF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

NOTE: In order to exercise their legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress timely receive testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch. A simple “yes” or “no” response is appropriate.

13. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate Committees of Congress? YES
14. Do you agree, if confirmed, to provide this Committee, its subcommittees,

other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so timely? YES

15. Do you agree, if confirmed, to consult with this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? YES
16. Do you agree, if confirmed, to keep this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? YES
17. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this Committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? YES
18. Do you agree, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this Committee? YES
19. Do you agree, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? YES

[The nominee responded to Parts B-F of the committee questionnaire. The text of the questionnaire is set forth in the Appendix to this volume. The nominee's answers to Parts B-F are contained in the committee's executive files.]

SIGNATURE AND DATE

I hereby state that I have read and signed Parts A and B of the foregoing Senate Armed Services Committee Questionnaire, and that the information provided therein and in any document appended thereto, is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, current, accurate, and complete.



This 24 day of January, 2024

[The nomination of Honorable Derek H. Chollet was returned to the President under the provisions of Senate Rule XXXI, paragraph 6 of the Standing Rules of the Senate on January 3, 2024.]

[Prepared questions submitted to Ms. Cara L. Abercrombie by Chairman Reed prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

QUALIFICATIONS

Question. The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)) has been designated as the Chief Acquisition and Sustainment Officer of the Department of Defense (DOD). If confirmed, in supporting the USD(A&S), you will be responsible for establishing policy and conducting oversight of an acquisition system through which the Department spends more than \$500 billion each year.

What background or experience do you have that qualifies you for this position?

Answer. My two decades of Federal service have prepared me well for the position of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition. If confirmed, I will bring a fresh perspective to acquisition policy, grounded in a deep understanding of defense policy and strategy, DOD strategic objectives, and the outcomes our acquisition policy needs to achieve for the warfighter. I have demonstrated throughout my career my willingness to make hard decisions, take risks and challenge the status quo, and work across the Department to achieve desired outcomes. I have extensive experience building and leading high performing teams that consistently meet mission objectives. I am a quick learner, able to enter a new organization, change culture, and drive performance. Notably, as the first President of the Defense Security Cooperation University, I moved a congressionally mandated security cooperation workforce certification program from concept to pilot program within 1 year. As Acting Deputy Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, managing an 800-person organization, I routinely engaged with the Services, Service program offices, as well as industry, to monitor progress in allied and partner foreign military sales cases.

Question. What background or experience, if any, do you have in executing programs to acquire products and/or services in both government and industry?

Answer. In successive roles in the Department of Defense, I have applied the types of management approaches that are essential to the successful execution of programs. This includes scoping requirements and expectations up front, setting target deadlines and milestone reviews to assess progress and holding personnel accountable.

Question. What background or experience, if any, do you have in overseeing the execution of programs to acquire products and/or services in both government and industry?

Answer. As the first President of the Defense Security Cooperation University, I oversaw the acquisition of software systems to support university management and workforce certification program compliance.

Question. What background or experience, if any, do you have in managing portfolios of programs in both government and industry?

Answer. As a leader in the Department of Defense and at the National Security Council, my role has been to set the vision for my teams, along with clear objectives, put in place the management structure with feedback loops to drive and monitor execution, and facilitate the training and tools that enable the workforce to achieve objectives.

Question. What background or experience, if any, do you have in developing policy and processes for programs to acquire products and/or services, as well as policies and processes for oversight of such programs?

Answer. During my tenure as President of the Defense Security Cooperation University, I set clear guidance for the leadership team to pursue automated software solutions where possible to reduce manpower requirements to implement the new Security Cooperation Workforce certification program. I established clear milestones across multiple lines of effort to ensure the University would meet the target opening date, and launch date of the pilot certification program. I built in feedback loops with stakeholders across the Department to allow iterative adjustments to the program structure and content during the pilot period.

Question. What qualifications, if any, do you have using modern data approaches, tools, and methods that prepare you to maintain visibility of, analyze, and manage data on the volume, variety, and complexity of the inventory of acquisition initiatives and programs in the Department?

Answer. I have consistently pursued use of modern data approaches and tools to support organizational and program management. As President of the Defense Security Cooperation University (DSCU) I worked with the Services to begin the process of linking their manpower data bases to the DSCU learning management system, in order to create an automated system by which individuals in positions requiring security cooperation workforce certification will be able to automatically track their certification requirements and progress on the DSCU website, while DSCU program managers and the individuals supervisors will track their compliance with program requirements. I understand the completion of this process is projected for fiscal year 2024.

Question. What background or experience, if any, do you have in managing contracts for services?

Answer. Throughout my career in Federal service, I have had responsibility for overseeing contracting officer representatives managing a variety of contracts. As Acting Deputy Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, I was the chief operating officer of an agency responsible for management oversight of hundreds of billions of dollars in foreign military sales.

RELATIONS WITH CONGRESS

Question. What are your views on the State of the relationship between the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition (ASD(A)) and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

Answer. In my view, it is imperative that the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition work in partnership with the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general, so that the Department of Defense has the acquisition authorities it needs to provide capability to the warfighter, while ensuring necessary oversight, accountability, and value for the taxpayer. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening that partnership.

Question. If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and the Office of the ASD(A)?

Answer. If confirmed, I would maintain open and transparent communications with Members of Congress and professional staff, and promptly respond to requests for information. I would proactively engage Congress regarding new initiatives or significant programmatic developments.

PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

Question. If confirmed, what are the top priorities you would plan to focus on during your tenure as the ASD(A)? What would be your plans for achieving these priorities?

Answer. If confirmed as the ASD(A), I plan to focus on three overarching priorities: increasing the speed of acquisition; reducing barriers to attract non-traditional suppliers; and workforce development. The acquisition community must work to get capability into the hands of the war fighter at the speed of relevance. To do this, we must aim to quickly move from prototyping to production at scale, and ensure the workforce is fully leveraging new, flexible authorities like Middle-Tier Acquisi-

tion and Other Transaction Authorities effectively. Attracting non-traditional providers helps ensure the Department accesses the latest technological innovations and fosters competition. We must reduce barriers to entry for small businesses and non-traditional suppliers while maintaining rigor and necessary oversight. Finally, we must ensure we can recruit, train, and retain an acquisition workforce that has the skills and expertise to meet the warfighter needs of the future. If confirmed, I would draw on best practices in the private and public sector for recruitment and training models to bring top talent into the acquisition community, and ensure they have the tools they need to thrive.

Question. In your opinion, what are the greatest challenges facing the DOD's acquisition community? What would be your plans for addressing these challenges, if confirmed?

Answer. The Department of Defense acquisition community faces many of the same challenges as the broader Federal Government. An aging workforce, and generational changes in the expectations of the labor force present recruitment and retention challenges. Additionally, the technical nature of Defense acquisition requires a highly trained workforce with practical experience to effectively meet acquisition objectives. If confirmed, I would build on the recent workforce initiatives like back-to-basics, and the Defense Civilian Training Corps pilot, and pursue practical, innovative approaches to recruiting, and ensuring training is fit to purpose.

Question. If confirmed, by what metrics will you measure your progress toward achieving these priorities and addressing these challenges?

Answer. If confirmed, I would establish clear metrics for measuring progress across priority lines of effort. Where necessary, I would establish new data collection requirements. Specifically, I would seek to track metrics such as the length of time it takes to go from prototype to contract, the frequency with which certain pathways are utilized, by component, or the number of contracts going to non-traditional suppliers. Similarly, I would work with the Services to track acquisition workforce data to identify trends. I would also seek subjective feedback from stakeholders in the Department, in industry, and Congress on whether policy changes are having the desired effect, or whether course corrections may be required.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACQUISITION REFORMS

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure the Department continues its progress in implementing congressionally mandated and Department-driven reforms to the acquisition system?

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to continue the momentum generated by the reforms to the defense acquisition system and I look forward to partnering with Congress going forward to implement, institutionalize, and ensure the continued success of these reforms.

Question. In your view, are there any congressionally mandated or Department-driven reforms that you would recommend be modified or suspended? If so, why?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with leaders throughout the Department, the Congress, and our industry partners to ensure that ongoing efforts are effectively implementing the reforms and consider modification to legislation or Department policy as appropriate.

Question. In your view, of the congressionally mandated or Department-driven reforms, which specifically have been the most successful and impactful acquisition reform initiatives of the past decade?

Answer. The Department recently established a new Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition Integration and Interoperability (DASD(AI2)) with the intent to address the joint acquisition management gap and to enable truly joint capabilities being delivered to the warfighter. Also, The Deputy Secretary of Defense tasked USD(A&S) with executing the Competitive Advantage Pathfinder (CAP) initiative that is aimed at identifying critical process barriers in the Big A acquisition system and institutionalizing the necessary reforms to deliver impactful warfighter capabilities at speed and at scale. If confirmed, I will work to deliver on this effort and coordinate between the requirements, resourcing, and acquisition communities to find other pathfinder efforts to speed delivery and inform the acquisition enterprise of lessons learned on how to reduce roadblocks.

Question. If confirmed, what additional acquisition reforms, if any, would you recommend?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the reform of the Defense Acquisition System. I understand that the major acquisition reform efforts implemented several years ago are now at a point where we can measure, analyze, and collect data on those reforms and use that knowledge to improve upon them and pursue further reforms.

Question. The Middle Tier Acquisition (MTA) pathway was established in the Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act to enable rapid prototyping and fielding of capabilities. Now that the first series of programs has reached the 5-year transition period, what are your observations about MTAs?

I believe that the development of the Adaptive Acquisition Framework has allowed for the speed of development and fielding of new capabilities to the warfighter. If confirmed, I would continue to expand this effort to coordinate between the requirements, resourcing, and acquisition communities to continue efforts to further speed delivery and inform the acquisition enterprise of lessons learned on how get new products to the warfighter. Additionally, I understand smaller programs are becoming more comfortable with the flexibility of the MTA pathway and the ability to expeditiously prototype without required documents from the JCIDS process that can slow down a program initiation. Through collaboration with the Components, the Department is gaining greater insight into the methodology behind selection of the MTA pathway and how it can update guidance to better facilitate MTA program success.

Question. What types of capabilities do you believe are best suited to the MTA pathway, and what capabilities should use the Major Capability Acquisition pathway?

Answer. I understand that the MTA pathway is suited for rapid prototyping before a larger investment is made into a more sustainable program. Rapid prototyping allows for the development of greater technical maturity, along with increasing a program's test readiness level before entering production to ensure successful operation. Use of the MTA rapid fielding pathway allows for programs to begin development within 6 months of program start, assists with the purchase of long lead items, and rapid production of already developed capabilities to accelerate delivery to the warfighter. Emerging capabilities that are immediately needed for the warfighter are best suited for the MTA pathway. The Major Capability Acquisition pathway is more suited for larger, longer-term production programs, and for acquiring and modernizing military-unique programs that provide enduring capabilities and is better suited for large dollar programs. If confirmed, I will work to ensure these pathways are being fully leveraged by the acquisition community to meet intent.

Question. MTA was explicitly designed to be an alternative to the traditional acquisition and requirements processes. However, over time, additional oversight and certification requirements have been imposed on MTAs that discourage its use.

Answer. I understand that, while this is true, the Components have used the MTA pathway for approximately 216 MTA programs since enactment of the Fiscal Year 2016 NDAA, and in the last fiscal year alone there were approximately 76 new programs that entered the MTA pathway. While there has been some additional oversight added to the process, it has not discouraged usage of the MTA Pathway which the Components find an extremely useful tool. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the MTA pathway is used as intended.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure MTA is a viable option that balances speed with oversight rigor?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review plans to update the DODI 5000.80, since it has been almost 4 years since the policy was approved. This update will balance the benefits of the speed of an MTA program while continuing the acquisition oversight rigor already contained in the policy. I will also conduct reviews on programs that exceed the major defense acquisition program dollar threshold requesting use of the pathway, a waiver of the 5-year limitation, and conduct bi-annual reviews with the Service Acquisition Executives on the portfolio of MTA programs.

The Software Acquisition Pathway (SWP) was established in the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act to facilitate iterative delivery and user feedback for software solutions.

Question. How do you compare metrics for large hardware systems to the value-assessments performed for the SWP pathway?

Answer. I understand that metrics for longer-running hardware programs are mostly focused on cost, schedule and performance and are based on a program's projected trajectory from a key decision point, such as Milestone B or Critical Design Review. Although hardware programs are becoming more adaptable to incorporate technology insertion, software-intensive programs have much greater opportunity to adapt as they capture and incorporate user feedback into the resulting solution. For programs on the software pathway, value assessments performed by users measure the actual trajectory of the program as it delivers value to the end user. Frequent engagement of both broadens awareness/understanding of modern software development practices and to establish feedback loops to identify what those customers/end-users of the SWP value and how to maximize its usage and value in the future.

Therefore, whereas hardware program metrics compare expected progress against actual progress, which may not lead to a product in the short term that the user values, software program value assessments track actual value delivered.

Question. If confirmed, how would you propose to work with the services to ensure the success of the SWP pathway?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the Service Acquisition Executives to mature how each organization employs modern software approaches to deliver results. The Department's software policy is relatively new and both OSD and the Services will need to share lessons learned and adapt policy accordingly. Furthermore, I would work to ensure that software acquisition professionals and their supervisors have access to the quality training they need through the Back-to-Basics initiative.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Question. Recent National Defense Authorization Acts have directed significant changes to the assignment of responsibilities within the defense acquisition system. For example, the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act split the former Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) into the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)) and the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (USD(R&E)).

In your view, in what ways could you strengthen the collaborative working relationship between the acquisition and sustainment and the research and engineering communities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with OUSD(R&E) to address the broad challenges we face in accelerating innovation and more quickly fielding capability to the warfighter. I will be mindful of the challenges and risks as we transition emerging technologies from research and development programs into fielded capabilities. Open communication and a close working relationship between A&S and R&E and other stakeholders can reduce these challenges and risks to the benefit of the Department.

In recent years, considerable authority and responsibility for acquisition activities have been given to the Services through: (1) the Secretary's delegation of Milestone Decision Authority for most acquisition programs to the Service Acquisition Executives (SAEs) and (2) Congress emphasis on the Service Chiefs role in requirements development, resourcing discussions, and tradeoff decisions for major defense acquisition programs.

Question. In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of delegating more responsibility for managing acquisition programs to the Services and away from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)?

Answer. It is my understanding that the delegation of much of the program management has provided OSD with the ability to focus on implementing reform efforts and transforming the defense acquisition system. It has also enabled OSD to strengthen its ability to perform portfolio-based oversight. One disadvantage is maintaining access to data on programs, which is vital to OSD oversight efforts. If confirmed, I will fully review the advantages and disadvantages of the delegation of authority and responsibility to the Services and make recommendations as appropriate to Congress.

Question. In this construct, where more responsibility for managing acquisition programs has been delegated to the Services, what suggestions would you make for USD(A&S) to maintain oversight and insight into programs while reducing excess bureaucratic burden on the process?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Department must gain or maintain data access to programs that have been delegated to the Services in order to enable oversight, and if confirmed I will work with the Services to ensure this access without causing excess bureaucratic burden. This data-driven oversight reduces the amount of time that program managers must spend in providing information to USD(A&S) and provides the OUSD(A&S) staff with a greater understanding of their portfolio and potential areas of risk.

Question. If confirmed as the ASD(A), how would you structure your relationship with the SAEs and the Service Chiefs? Are there any programs for which Milestone Decision Authority should be moved to the OSD-level or, conversely, returned to the SAEs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that decision authority is aligned between OSD and the Services and maintained at the proper level to account for program complexity, dollar value, and technological maturity. I would work with the SAEs to understand their issues with executing efforts under the current Defense Acquisi-

tion System and, as warranted, make recommendations to change a programs milestone decision authority.

Question. In your view, what should be the respective roles and responsibilities of the Secretary of Defense, USD(A&S), and the SAEs in ensuring acquisition programs deliver promised capabilities to the end user on time and on budget? In your view, how should the role of the ASD(A) support that?

Answer. I believe the role of the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and the Service Acquisition Executives is to operate in partnership, consistent with their statutory responsibilities, to ensure the effective operation of the Defense Acquisition System. If confirmed as the ASD(A), I would work with my counterparts in the services to support the Under Secretary of Defense in delivering capabilities.

Question. If confirmed as the ASD(A), how would you structure your relationship with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment to ensure acquisition programs consider sustainment planning and costs so that systems are sustainable over their lifecycle?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my counterpart in ASD(S) to ensure open lines of communication between our offices. I will work to collaborate on sustainment and life cycle costs of acquisitions within DOD.

Question. What further steps, if any, do you believe are necessary to properly align authority and accountability in the acquisition system?

Answer. If confirmed, I will make the assessment of the authorities and accountability a high priority. I will work with the USD(A&S) to ensure the authorities are appropriately aligned, as this is critical to ensure the effectiveness of the system.

Question. The acquisition of information technology, ranging from embedded software in weapons systems to the procurement of commercial cloud computing services, is an increasingly important challenge for defense acquisition programs. If confirmed, what role will you have in developing acquisition strategies for information technology systems and services and how is that role different, in your view, from that of the Chief Information Officer?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the USD(A&S), CIO, the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Officer (CDAO), and the Components on information technology systems and service acquisition strategies. The Office of the USD(A&S) can provide oversight and guidance to ensure those systems and services are effectively and efficiently developed and integrated with hardware and service contracts.

Question. If confirmed, what responsibilities related to policies for, and oversight of, the acquisition of information technology systems and services should be delegated to the Chief Information Officer?

Answer. If confirmed, I will help ensure an effective partnership between the USD(A&S), CIO and CDAO and determine an appropriate balance of technical, functional and acquisition oversight. Having properly supported SAEs is critical to successfully implementing acquisition programs.

Question. If confirmed as the ASD(A), how would you structure your relationship with the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Officer (CDAO)?

Answer. Data, Artificial Intelligence, and innovation must become the cornerstones of the Department's abilities to measure, monitor and transform. If confirmed, I would actively partner with CDAO, in pursuit of effectively leveraging CDAO efforts.

The acquisition system relies on the investment, development, and production of key strategic resources and components within the industrial base including rare earth minerals, microelectronics, and solid rocket motors, to name just a few. However, within the Department, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy (ASD(IBP)) is responsible for coordinating DOD's industrial base policy, including providing support to industry through tools like the Defense Production Act.

Question. If confirmed, how would you structure your relationship with the ASD(IBP) to ensure DOD has a coordinated industrial base policy to develop and protect key strategic materials and industries?

Answer. The Acquisition community needs the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) to execute its programs. As partners, we need a ready DIB to deliver the capabilities at the scale and speed the warfighter needs. If confirmed, I would work closely with my peers across the Acquisition and Sustainment Office, including ASD(IBP), to ensure the Defense Industrial Base is ready to support the delivery of critical capabilities.

Question. If confirmed, what recommendations, if any, would you have for providing the Department additional statutory tools to enable better management of the defense industrial base?

Answer. The Acquisition community needs a strong and resilient Defense Industrial Base to execute its programs and support the warfighter. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy (ASD(IBP)) is the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment for developing DOD policies regarding the Defense Industrial Base. If confirmed, I will work closely with the ASD(IBP), USD(A&S), and Office of Management and Budget on assessing the need for additional statutory tools.

Question. Small business programs and international cooperation activities also fall under the ASD(IBP) but are important elements of a comprehensive acquisitions approach. If confirmed, how would you better integrate small business and international cooperation considerations into your acquisition oversight activities?

Answer. Small business is critical to fostering innovation in our defense industrial base. In addition, developing greater industrial base cooperation among our close allies and partners is important to supporting supply chain resiliency. If confirmed, I would work with the ASD(IBP), as well as the Director for the Office of Small Business Programs and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Development and International Engagements, who have direct oversight of small business programs and international cooperation activities, respectively, to ensure that their considerations and equities are incorporated into the Department's acquisition oversight activities.

MANAGING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE DEFENSE ACQUISITION SYSTEM

Question. Many of the Department's major defense acquisition programs have established overly optimistic cost, schedule, and performance goals that they have subsequently struggled to achieve, resulting in cost growth and schedule delays.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to accelerate speed to fielding of capabilities users find most relevant in major warfighting and business system programs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Service Acquisition Executives to accelerate speed to fielding of capabilities relevant to warfighters. I will focus on the early phases of program and technology development to provide these programs with a solid foundation, and I will emphasize the need for innovation and data-driven decisionmaking to ensure that we are pursuing all options at the speed of relevance.

Question. What is your assessment of the Department's ability to estimate lifecycle costs for its programs and activities? If confirmed, what specific changes would you make to improve this ability?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with ASD(Sustainment), CAPE, and the Service Acquisition Executives to develop and refine accurate lifecycle cost estimates. Both estimation and management of sustainment costs is a significant challenge, but I will utilize proven cost estimation methodologies to assist in making accurate assessments of lifecycle costs.

Question. What is your understanding of the role the office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) plays in these areas of lifecycle cost estimation and program performance monitoring?

Answer. Estimating and managing sustainment costs is a significant challenge. If confirmed, I will work closely with the CAPE cost assessment group and the Service Acquisition Executives to understand the status of the Department's current lifecycle costing capabilities.

Question. If confirmed, how would you structure your relationship with CAPE to best leverage their independence and expertise in these topics?

Answer. If confirmed, I would recognize CAPE's statutory equities in the acquisition process and ensure its views are considered in decisions related to the CAPE's responsibilities.

Question. What is your assessment of the Department's ability to assess and appropriately manage programs based on the programs technical maturity?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with OUSD(R&E) and Service Acquisition Executives to assess the status of relevant data, its availability and accessibility, and use that data to inform decisions on managing programs. I will build on progress made to date to make data accessible and usable at all levels of the Department.

Question. What is your assessment of the Department's ability to assess a program's health over its lifecycle, with respect to the availability of the necessary industrial base and supply chain?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the ASD for Industrial Base Policy to assess a program's health over its lifetime, with respect to the defense industrial base and supply chain risk management. Risks develop when our defense systems depend on outdated technologies with diminishing manufacturing sources or foreign

sources of supplies. The Department's capabilities are dependent on a ready and reliable access to a robust supply chain.

Question. Traditionally, acquisition programs are managed on a program-by-program basis. In your view, are there advantages in moving toward a more portfolio-based management approach? What would be the disadvantages of adopting such an approach?

Answer. We are now over 5 years beyond a transformative acquisition reform effort that, among other things, moved management of acquisition programs to a portfolio-based approach. If confirmed, I will work with the SAEs to determine lessons learned, best practices, and advantages and disadvantages they have found in the portfolio-management approach. I will welcome oversight by GAO and the IG and give full consideration to recommendations they may make on potential improvements.

Question. In your view, what are the strength and weaknesses of the current Adaptive Acquisition Framework?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the USD(A&S)'s data driven review of the strengths and weaknesses of the Adaptive Acquisition Framework to capitalize and expand on our strengths and mitigate our weaknesses.

Question. In your view, what further changes, if any, should be made to DOD's Adaptive Acquisition Framework?

Answer. As of now, I am not aware of the need for any significant changes. However, if confirmed, I will work with the SAEs, to use a data-driven review to continuously monitor and, as warranted, recommend ways to improve the performance of the Defense Acquisition System.

Question. What is one major initiative you would like to accomplish, if confirmed, while serving as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition?

Answer. Acquisition policy has undergone significant change in recent years. If confirmed, I will work with the broader acquisition community to ensure policy changes and new authorities are being implemented as intended, and will recommend any improvements or adjustments that will further improve overall performance.

ACQUISITION DATA

Question. The production of Selected Acquisition Reports will sunset this year and will be replaced with a new reporting system. To implement a risk-based approach for managing acquisition programs, many experts believe that DOD needs to adopt modern tools and methods for collecting and analyzing large amounts of acquisition data. Congress has mandated that the new reporting system include acquisition data and metrics recommended by CAPE and is seeking more timely and useful reporting of programs cost, schedule, and performance.

In your opinion, does the Department have sufficient and timely data to assess the full range of risks facing acquisition programs, including risks pertaining to development and sustainment costs, schedule, performance, integration, supply chains, and technical maturity, among others?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to determine the status of access to relevant data and to prioritize availability, accessibility, and use of that data to inform decisionmaking within the Acquisition and Sustainment community and at all levels of the Department. I will prioritize engagement with Department, congressional, executive branch, and Industry leaders to address any identified shortcomings.

Question. What recommendations, if any, do you have for employing other metrics to measure the health and effectiveness of the acquisition system than those currently in use?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize review of existing metrics for measuring the health and effectiveness of the Defense Acquisition System to determine their adequacy and identify potential improvements. I will work with the Services to make any needed changes and to prioritize collection of data required to achieve needed insight.

Question. What specific steps would you take, if confirmed, to ensure the acquisition enterprise is collecting authoritative data, including data from industry partners and other DOD organizations to effectively model risk, and using appropriate indicators of program and portfolio health?

Answer. Availability and use of authoritative data has long been a Department focus, with recent efforts focused on implementation of the CDAO's Advana platform. If confirmed, I will continue scaling these efforts with particular focus on policy and incentives to remove the cultural barriers to open sharing of the data required for risk modeling and program and portfolio health insight. I recognize that data from industry and other DOD organizations is critical to this kind of insight

and will prioritize engagement across organizational and corporate boundaries to foster transparency and sharing and use of data to manage risk and improve acquisition.

Question. In your view, what ways do you think the Department could better use the acquisition data it collects to improve decisionmaking for both the acquisition and sustainment of systems and services in the Department?

Answer. I recognize the importance of considering both acquisition and sustainment of systems and services in assessing acquisition health and risk. If confirmed, I will work with USD(A&S) and ASD(S) to review the quality, accuracy, and timeliness of collected data and to improve its use for insight and decisionmaking. I will prioritize improvements in understanding acquisition program, sustainment system, and services interdependencies through portfolio analysis.

Question. If confirmed, what suggestions, if any, do you have for the format, content, and tailoring of future congressional reporting on acquisition programs?

Answer. My understanding is that dashboards for acquisition program (Major Capability Acquisition and Middle Tier of Acquisition) insight are now available to congressional users. I also understand that OSD CAPE has identified data additions to the Selected Acquisition Reports. If confirmed, I will work to review the existing products and plans and adjust as appropriate with the goal of maintaining transparency while modernizing format.

SOFTWARE AND IT ACQUISITION

Question. Software has become one of the most critical components of DOD systems, but recent studies by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Defense Innovation Board, and the Defense Science Board, among others, show the Department's software development practices have not kept up with leading industry practices. While DOD has taken significant steps in the last few years to improve program management, such as establishing a software acquisition pathway emphasizing rapid delivery and user engagement, programs have yet to consistently incorporate leading software development practices.

What do you believe are the major barriers to DOD fully adopting modern software development approaches and what additional steps would you take to drive their adoption throughout DOD?

Answer. If confirmed, I will coordinate with OSD, Joint Staff, the Services, and others to build on the Department's initial momentum, and modernize enterprise processes, strategies, and tools for rapid digital capability delivery. I believe it is essential to tailor Department interoperability and requirements processes for software. Although the Department has made strides in adoption of modern software development approach with the software acquisition pathway policy, given that software is pervasive in almost all DOD systems, regardless of how they are acquired, and that must be taken into account across the other pathways.

Question. What is your assessment of the current capabilities of the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) to properly execute agile software development?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(A&S) to promote leading private-sector industry practices throughout DOD where delivery of capability is done iteratively and collaboratively with the government, which can reduce cycle times and be more responsive to changing technologies, operations, and threats.

Question. In your view, how are initiatives like the Defense Digital Service and Software Factories helping or hindering the Department's progress in acquiring software intensive systems?

Answer. DOD is scaling its software production capabilities by adopting a framework that follows commercial industry's model for modern infrastructure and deploying digital products with security, reliability, and speed. DOD still has more to do to build on this momentum, and modernize its enterprise processes, strategies, and culture for rapid digital capability delivery, including improving transparency and understanding of the transition to scale.

If confirmed, I will work with DOD CIO, and the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Officer to provide our programs the enterprise tools and processes they need to support more rapid and secure digital product delivery. While most companies in the Defense Industrial Base have started to adopt agile software development methodologies, it is important to ensure that DOD programs require agile methodologies in their Request for Proposals and evaluate the agile capabilities of the offerors. It is also important to ensure the capabilities of the acquisition program offices align with the agile ceremonies recommended for modern development processes.

Question. In your view, are the training, education, and workforce development activities the Department has instituted helping to prepare the acquisition and development workforce to better absorb and adapt to these changes?

Answer. OUSD(A&S) has a leadership role over the Defense Acquisition University and shared chair responsibilities in the Digital Talent Management Forum. The Department has continued to develop specialized training for DOD software acquisition professionals and is also providing them access to commercial training outlets through partnerships managed by the Defense Acquisition University. While the opportunities are in place to support the workforce, it will be critically important for leaders and supervisors to emphasize the areas where our workforce members need to grow. If confirmed, I will work with the members of the acquisition Workforce Leadership Team to connect practitioners with the opportunities that will help them adapt to modern software approaches.

In recent years, U.S. Cyber Command (CYBERCOM) was granted acquisition authority for the cyber programs under its purview, and has been actively working to grow the workforce, processes, and capabilities necessary to be effective.

Question. What is your assessment of CYBERCOM's progress in this respect?

Answer. USCYBERCOM is doing meaningful work, but faces many of the same challenges with workforce, processes, and capabilities as the broader DOD Acquisition community. I am aware of the enhanced budget control authority granted to the Commander of U.S. Cyber Command by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA. If confirmed, I would work with The Principal Cyber Advisor and USCYBERCOM to ensure it is drawing from and sharing best practices and lessons learned with the broader acquisition community.

Question. If confirmed, what do you see as your role in helping provide oversight during this formative stage in the development of these cyber programs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will provide oversight and guidance, in conjunction with The Principal Cyber Advisor, as USCYBERCOM works to identify any shortfalls and risk in organization, process, documentation, and capability development that limits the Cyberspace Operations Enterprise's capability and efficacy. This would include engagement and collaboration with The Principal Cyber Advisor, USCYBERCOM and other key stakeholders to advise on governance boards; leverage Integrated Acquisition Portfolio Reviews (IAPR) to identify broader portfolio interdependences, risks, and opportunities; and ensure associated directives and action items are executed accordingly.

Question. In your view, what metrics or methodologies should the Department be using to better understand and measure the progress and maturity of the acquisition structure?

Answer. Cyberspace is a critical warfighting domain. As such, a balanced acquisition process executing at mission levels while retaining and reinforcing acquisition rigor and discipline should be the first and foremost measurement for DOD. If confirmed, I would work with The Principal Cyber Advisor and USCYBERCOM to introduce a process for measuring the progress and maturity of the acquisition structure.

ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES

Question. What is your opinion on ways DOD could incorporate iterative development approaches centered on fielding minimum viable capabilities?

Answer. In my view, DOD should work to embrace rapid, iterative product development that encourages innovation. If confirmed, I would look to draw from industry best practices in this area to reduce cycle times and be more responsive to changing technologies, operations, priorities, and threats. If confirmed, I will work to incorporate iterative product development to facilitate innovative capabilities.

Question. To what extent do you believe DOD has broadly implemented commercial best practice agile development approaches adequately for software and hardware systems?

Answer. I believe DOD has made significant progress over the last few years enabling more modern agile development and acquisition practices, policies, pilots, and training thanks in large part to strong congressional support. Congress's support enabled DOD to develop the new Software Acquisition Pathway to acquire and deliver software using modern, commercial software development practices including agile software development. If confirmed, I would work to ensure the Department builds on this momentum, and continues to modernize its enterprise processes, strategies, and culture for agility and rapid digital capability delivery.

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

Question. The rapid pace at which our adversaries are fielding technological advancements demands the Department establish an acquisition system that can deliver capabilities that are responsive to new threats and emerging technological opportunities.

In your view, do the current policies and practices of the defense acquisition system sufficiently encourage and support the adoption of disruptive technologies in the Department's acquisition programs? If not, what changes would you recommend in support of these initiatives?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure we meet the imperative to offer a range of options to programs, such as applying new technologies and concepts. I believe we have improved flexibility in the Defense Acquisition System, but we must continue to evolve to become more agile and leverage these innovative technologies. I will also leverage the recent legislation that authorized the establishment of an Acquisition Innovation Research Center to research, model, and pilot innovative practices for adoption by the Department.

Question. What do you believe are the specific technologies that will be critical to defeating a near-peer competitor?

Answer. The Department has many opportunities to leverage current and emerging technologies to ensure military superiority. If confirmed, I will work the Services, the Combatant Commanders, and USD(R&E) to ensure we are successful in converting those technologies into warfighting capabilities. I support Under Secretary Heidi Shyu's recent Technology Priorities memo that outlined 14 technologies across 3 major areas including hypersonics, directed energy weapons, and integrated sensor and cyber resiliency. If confirmed, I will place special attention on ensuring we can attract commercial industry partners in areas, such as AI, autonomy, and advanced computing so that the Department can obtain the most cutting-edge technology at the most affordable price.

Question. In your opinion, how should the Department define and manage concepts like risk and failure so that program managers can try new technologies and acquisition practices, derive lessons learned and establish a common understanding of best practices, and more quickly drive technological advancement in ongoing acquisition programs and into current fielded capabilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will encourage acquisition decisionmakers at all levels to balance risk and reward when crafting technology development and fielding strategies. To achieve the desired outcomes and innovation, I believe that some failure is to be expected and accepted as part of the learning and discovery process. This learning will occur throughout the program lifecycle but with the appropriate application of prototyping and experimentation, major issues should be identified as early as possible. Embracing the concept of iterative development whereby a basic capability is delivered and improved over time will also reduce the number of risks a program has to manage, increase technology insertion opportunities, increase user feedback, and enable accelerated fielding.

Question. What do you view as the major barriers to entry for new companies that want to do business with DOD? How would you address these barriers, if confirmed?

Answer. Non-traditional companies struggle with long timelines from DOD budgeting and contracting, concerns about intellectual property, and regulatory requirements. I understand the Deputy Secretary of Defense has established an Innovation Ecosystem initiative to address some of these challenges. If confirmed, I will work with the Deputy Secretary of Defense and USD(A&S) to address these barriers to include engaging with industry, working with the Services to simplify contract requirements, and maximizing usage of varied contracting mechanisms (e.g., Other Transactions and Commercial Solutions Openings).

DOD continues to struggle with the transition of new technologies into existing programs of record. The USD(R&E) enterprise has primary responsibility for the development of new advanced technologies, but the Acquisition and Sustainment enterprise must do its part to address the transition of technology development programs into procurement and fielding.

Question. In your view, what impediments to technology transition do you see within the Department?

Answer. Technology transition continues to be a critical issue across the Department of Defense. In my view, there are a number of challenges that make this difficult: budgeting timelines and the PPBE process, outmoded requirements systems preventing programs from moving rapidly, and complex decisionmaking processes. If confirmed, I will work closely with USD(R&E) to address these issues, and will work to fully leverage the new Competitive Advantage Pathfinders (CAPs) managed by the new DASD for Acquisition Integration and Interoperability.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to increase the rate and frequency at which proven technologies developed by DOD, defense industry, international partners, or the commercial sector are transitioned into programs of record?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with OUSD(R&E) to align acquisition programs with advances in the technology sector, such as building and delivering ca-

pabilities iteratively to reduce cycle times that are more responsive to changing technologies, operations, and threats. This is particularly true for software which is central to every major DOD mission and weapon system. DOD should continue to employ modular, open systems approaches as well as commercial as-a-service models and invest in foundational enterprise infrastructure that allow rapid insertion of emerging technologies.

OTHER TRANSACTION AUTHORITY (OTA)

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to promote the appropriate use of OTAs to encourage the participation of new and non-traditional defense contractors in the defense industrial base?

Answer. If confirmed, I will champion appropriate use of OTAs as a means for the Department to access innovative solutions from the private sector. I will ensure the acquisition workforce has the necessary resources to effectively use this authority. I will ask the Principal Director of Defense Pricing and Contracting to advise me on the guidance, training, and tools that have been issued to address recent statutory changes and recommendations from the DOD Inspector General and Government Accountability Office.

Question. In your view, what do you see as the benefits and downsides of using OTA consortium agreements?

Answer. In my view, the consortium model is beneficial to the Department because it helps stimulate innovation, attract Non-Traditional Defense Contractors (NDCs) to expand the defense industrial base, and deliver innovative technologies and capabilities to the warfighter. If confirmed, I will work to enhance transparency in other transaction agreements that are executed under the consortium approach.

EARNED VALUE MANAGEMENT

Question. The earned value management system (EVM) is used to assess the cost and schedule of major capability acquisitions for proactive course correction. However, the Section 809 Panel reported that EVM does not measure product quality and concluded, EVM has been required on most large software programs but has not prevented cost, schedule, or performance issues. In 2009, DOD reported to the committee that a program could perform ahead of schedule and under cost according to EVM metrics but deliver a capability that is unusable by the customer and stated the program manager should ensure that the EVM process measures the quality and technical maturity of technical work products instead of just the quantity and timeliness of work performed.

If confirmed, what steps would you take, if any, to re-evaluate the performance metrics collected by DOD of its contractors that correspond with leading practices?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with colleagues across the Department to ensure DOD is continuously re-evaluating the metrics used by contractors to measure performance. Activities such as creating a more robust structure to capture schedule risk assessments (SRA); developing metrics for technical baselines; and reducing the cost burden by reducing paper reporting and removing nonvalue analysis will allow for data collection while minimizing the impact of collection.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take, if any, to require contractors that employ the DOD Digital Engineering (DE) Strategy to maintain valid information in the digital authoritative source of truth that is sufficient for program managers to make informed and timely decisions to manage the risk of achieving cost, schedule, and performance objectives?

Answer. Use of a DE strategy should be coupled with an overall program strategy that addresses all types of program risk and must look at the entire program life cycle from design and development through production and sustainment. These DE models are key in all aspects of the program and must be tightly coupled with the Intellectual Property strategy and the use of Modular Open System features. If confirmed, I will ensure that contractors maintain valid information in the digital authoritative source of truth in order to allow program managers to make informed and timely decisions.

PLANNING, PROGRAMMING, BUDGETING, AND EXECUTION (PPBE)

Question. The Department's acquisition process is closely linked with its PPBE process, and acquisition programs can move only as nimbly as the budget process can allocate resources that fund them. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 established a Commission to examine and make recommendations for PPBE reform.

Are you aware of the Commission's interim report and its recommendations? If so, what are your views of those recommendations?

Answer. The PPBE process requires years of planning before finally getting funds appropriated, which is not conducive to the kind of responsiveness and agility necessary to counter adversaries who do not have to operate under similar constraints. I am aware of the Commission's interim report and understand that the team in ASD(A) is working closely with the Commission. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the PPBE Commission and stakeholders across the Department and in Congress to examine the system issues and develop proposals to address these challenges.

Question. In your view, what other changes, if any, are needed to the PPBE process to ensure it can effectively support ongoing acquisition reforms, including by improving timeliness, reducing bureaucracy, and increasing flexibility?

Answer. Refining the PPBE process is important to realizing agile and timely procurement of key emerging technology. If confirmed, I will assess what changes, beyond those recommended by the PPBE commission may be necessary to improve the acquisition process.

Question. In your view, what steps can the Department take under the current PPBE construct to ensure acquisition programs are appropriately resourced in a timely manner?

Answer. The Competitive Advantage Pathfinders (CAPs) initiative is aimed at identifying ways to align PPBE with the requirements and acquisition systems. To my understanding, the A&S team is also working closely with the PPBE Commission through the Acquisition Innovation Research Center and the DASD for Acquisition Integration and Interoperability. If confirmed, I will work partners in CAPE, the Comptroller, and Congress to apply lessons learned to accelerate acquisition of important technologies.

One of the major obstacles to successfully bringing emerging technologies into the Department's acquisition system is the so-called valley of death, or the gap in funding between the development of a new technology and its transition into a program of record.

Question. In your view, what changes are needed to the PPBE and other processes to help bridge the valley of death?

Answer. The Defense budget development and appropriation process can make it difficult to fund an unproven technology as an acquisition program. If confirmed, I will continually assess our processes to ensure transparency and security while balancing the imperative for speed. I would advocate for re-evaluating our decision processes to ensure we are event driven vice calendar driven, responsive to change, and incentivizing innovation.

Question. In your view, to what extent should the role of the government's systems engineering commands (e.g., Naval Warfare Centers and the Air Force Research Laboratory), as the government's technical experts in particular technology areas, be used to help emerging technologies bridge the valley of death?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work diligently with my USD (R&E) counterparts to ensure the warfighter's prioritized capability gaps are appropriately communicated and aligned with the efforts of our laboratories and industry partners, to include small businesses and venture capitalists. Organizations such as Warfare Centers and Research Labs provide great opportunities to engage with non-traditional companies and create long lasting partnerships and talent pipelines to form bridges over the valley of death.

Question. In your view, do the military departments and defense agencies have different results in transitioning technology developed in-house, versus technology developed by others, such as DARPA, the Strategic Capabilities Office, or the commercial sector?

Answer. In my view, aligning the requirements, resources and development communities is critical to preserving the United States technical advantage. The Military Departments have processes to align technology investments from within their own centers to acquisition partners. Defense agencies can look at needs in a different way and bring cross functional and joint requirements to the forefront of emerging technologies development. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts in Comptroller, CAPE, Joint Staff, and the Services to identify the best way to transition technology and institutionalize those pathways into the Defense Acquisition System.

Question. The Goldwater-Nichols Act (GNA) of 1986 was enacted just prior to the explosion in information technology. The GNA successfully instilled a joint culture in the Department's warfighting operations, but the PPBE, requirements, and systems acquisition processes have remained service centric.

What are your views on how to address jointness in the acquisition and sustainment system?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with colleagues across the Department to identify ways to increase interoperability, including by ensuring the recently established DASD for Acquisition Integration and Interoperability, can successfully identify and address portfolio capability gaps in the joint force.

Question. As there are few options other than the military departments, Special Operations Command, and Cyber Command to field and maintain systems, do you believe consideration should be given to creating some joint acquisition and sustainment capabilities? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Ensuring acquisition and sustainment of joint capabilities is critical to meeting warfighter requirements. If confirmed, I would work with Department leaders to review the effects of previous joint efforts to understand the utility of applying those concepts to future efforts.

REQUIREMENTS

Question. The Joint Capabilities and Integration Development System (JCIDS) process was established nearly 20 years ago with the intention of addressing overlap and duplication in the Military Services acquisition programs.

With respect to driving the acquisition system to deliver capabilities that meet the national security needs of the Nation, in your view, what do you see as the primary shortfalls of the current requirements building process?

Answer. The Joint Staff has made strides in the last few years to take a more strategic look at requirements through the Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC) and the Capability Portfolio Management Reviews (CPMRs). These efforts provide the acquisition community with a clear signal on the highest priority capabilities in the Department. If confirmed, I would work with my colleagues in the acquisition community and the Joint Staff to translate these capabilities into requirements documents.

Question. If confirmed, how would you propose to reform the process?

Answer. I understand the Department recently introduced the Competitive Advantage Pathways process, which is focused on integrating the requirements, budgeting and acquisition processes to provide capabilities in a shorter timeframe. If confirmed, I would assess the progress of this effort, and apply and lessons learned to the Defense Acquisition System.

Question. The requirements process has often been incapable of developing requirements that consider technological advances made by DOD's own research programs. In recent years,

DOD has also undertaken several initiatives to improve the Department's connectivity with commercial technology companies.

If confirmed, what changes would you suggest to ensure that emerging technologies from within DOD, defense industry, and the commercial sector are better accounted for and leveraged within the requirements process?

Answer. The Department has established two efforts, Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve (RDER) and Competitive Advantage Pathways (CAPs), to find ways to accelerate the introduction of new capabilities to the warfighter. If confirmed, I would work with USD(R&E), and the Services to institute lessons learned from RDER and CAPs to identify how to transition capabilities rapidly and efficiently from prototype, to production, to fielding, into the hands of our warfighters.

Question. Many requirements are established with technical goals that are unachievable at any reasonable cost or schedule.

If confirmed, what changes would you recommend to the requirements development process, including workforce changes, to support the development of requirements that allow for risk-informed tradeoffs that are technically feasible or commercially available at reasonable costs and schedules?

Answer. The Joint Warfighting Council (JWC) and Capability Portfolio Management Reviews (CPMRs) give the acquisition community an understanding of the capability gaps we much address to reverse the erosion of our technical edge. If confirmed, I would work with colleagues in the Office of USD(A&S), the Joint Staff, CAPE, and the Services to convert these capability gaps into requirements.

JOINT ACQUISITION PROGRAMS

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

Answer. Every acquisition program is different, which necessitates a Defense Acquisition System that provides flexible tools and pathways for the acquisition workforce to use the right tools for the specific capability being acquired. To deliver integrated capabilities that span across Service domains, a joint acquisition program can make sense. However, it can take many forms as a joint program office, like

F-35's fully staffed program office, or the Chem-Bio program that serves as an integrator. If confirmed, I will work across the Department to ensure the Acquisition workforce continues to have flexible tools and pathways available to deliver capability at speed and scale.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Services to ensure the workforce is using the right tools and pathways for the capability being delivered.

Question. What are your views on joint, enabling or cross-cutting capabilities that may not be treated as acquisition programs, such as JADC2? In your view, does the Department or the individual services have sufficient authority to advocate or manage these capabilities to ensure there are no seams in planning or execution of such efforts?

Answer. I understand the USD(A&S) recently established the DASD for Acquisition Integration and Interoperability to address cross-cutting capabilities that may not be treated as individual acquisition programs. If confirmed, I will work ensure this office, which would report to me, is able to execute this mission effectively.

Question. If confirmed, how would you facilitate processes for the services to empower acquisition professionals and reduce institutional policy barriers to enable cross service requirements development and capabilities discussions?

Answer. If confirmed, in addition to championing the Competitive Advantage Pathfinders effort, being managed by the office of the DASD for Acquisition Integration and Interoperability, I would work closely with the Services to identify other areas for reducing barriers to cross-service requirements development and capabilities discussions. I would also ensure the workforce has access to the tools and the training to effectively advance these objectives.

TEST AND EVALUATION

Question. Test and evaluation activities ensure that system performance meets specifications and requirements, and that deployed capabilities are operationally effective against threats.

In your opinion, what is the appropriate role of developmental, operational, and live-fire testing in the acquisition process?

Answer. In my opinion, realistic testing throughout all system lifecycle stages is critical to providing measures of effectiveness and performance of our systems and is a key to the success of the acquisition process. If confirmed, I will work with the Service Acquisition Executives, the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation, and the USD(R&E) to ensure the acquisitions process adequately accounts for necessary testing.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure acquisition programs efficiently address issues and deficiencies identified through test and evaluation?

Answer. In my opinion, at each milestone and key knowledge point of a system's development, relevant test information must be available as one of the inputs to measure program maturity. It is necessary to identify issues during development so they can be corrected going forward. If confirmed, I will work with the Service Acquisition Executives, the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation and the USD(R&E) to address issues and deficiencies that arise in testing as part of acquisition policy and process.

Question. Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe DOD should procure weapon systems that have not demonstrated, through test and evaluation, to be operationally effective and operationally suitable?

Answer. In my view, DOD must appropriately manage risks throughout all acquisition programs. As we deliver new capabilities that are in urgent need by our warfighters, we must do it right. If confirmed, I will work with my staff, the Service Acquisition Executives, the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation, the USD(R&E), and the warfighter to manage this risk calculus.

Question. If confirmed, under what circumstances would you support accepting more risk in programs, specifically test failures, to accelerate the fielding of new systems and capabilities to counter an advanced threat?

Answer. In my opinion, we learn from every test and the knowledge gained from each test informs the ultimate risk versus benefit calculus that we must use assess whether to accelerate a given capability in a given situation. If confirmed, I will coordinate with all stakeholders to weigh the risk to field an urgent need versus a delay for additional testing.

Question. In recent years, the Department's test and evaluation community has sought to integrate aspects of developmental and operational testing and conduct such testing earlier in the acquisition process. In your view, what are the advan-

tages and disadvantages of increasing the integration among the developmental, acquisition, and testing communities?

Answer. My understanding is that the Department's test and evaluation policy emphasizes integrated testing. Acquisition, development, and testing of a given system are intertwined throughout the program lifecycle. If these efforts are not integrated, they will impact the pace of development and the ultimate quality of the delivered system. If confirmed, I will work to ensure our requirements, engineering, test, and acquisition organizations work together.

Question. What other reforms would you recommend improving the timeliness, efficiency, and effectiveness of the test and evaluation process to correct technical deficiencies more quickly in weapon systems?

Answer. If confirmed, I will assess the effectiveness of current policies to ensure they facilitate the acquisition community's ability to correct deficiencies identified in test and evaluation in an efficient and effective manner.

Question. If confirmed, how would you work with USD(R&E), the developmental test and the modeling and simulation communities, the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation, and the Military Services to ensure the Department has the infrastructure, workforce, and other resources it needs to support the test and evaluation needs of current and future acquisition programs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with USD(R&E), the test community and the Services to ensure their organizational expertise is leveraged and integrated into the acquisition system. I will do this by ensuring program data is freely accessible and transparent through system development, production, deployment and sustainment. I will ensure research, engineering, and test equities are heard at program reviews and decision gates for Military Service programs. If confirmed, I will assess the existing infrastructure, workforce, and other resources needed to support the test and evaluation of our acquisition programs.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY/TECHNICAL DATA RIGHTS

Question. In your view, do you believe DOD has implemented intellectual property (IP) best practices sufficiently to ensure that the government has appropriate access to IP and technical data to give proper return on investments in Federal research and development (R&D), retain the ability to re-compete programs to control costs or improve quality, and exercise better control over program sustainment costs?

Answer. In my view, the Department has taken important steps to better address the implementation of intellectual property (IP) best practices. Nevertheless, we must continue to focus on IP challenges as a strategic priority. This issue must be addressed to ensure sustainment costs are more affordable and that the DOD can take full advantage of industry's faster pace of technology innovation. If confirmed, I will work to ensure IP and technical rights are considered early in the acquisition process.

Question. What is your understanding of how recommendations from the Intellectual Property Cadre have improved the Department's ability to negotiate appropriate IP data rights for contracts, or helped identify areas where additional focused training might improve negotiation outcomes?

Answer. I believe that the recent creation of the Intellectual Property (IP) Cadre office has resulted in expanded awareness of IP challenges and best practices in the Department and is an important step in helping the Department rise to meet these challenges. If confirmed, I would work to modernize IP acquisition regulations and related guidance, and to update and improve the delivery of IP training for the acquisition workforce. These activities are important to emphasize early planning for programs long-term IP needs and negotiation of tailored, flexible, licenses that provide a more effective balance of DOD and industry interests.

Question. If confirmed, what adjustments would you recommend to DOD's practices in negotiating IP and technical data rights for programs to improve DOD's ability to develop, procure, and sustain new systems and technologies affordably?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work to ensure the DOD acquisition workforce has the necessary training to take greater advantage of agile and flexible tools such as negotiating specialized licenses and fully implementing modular open systems approaches (MOSA) in DOD programs.

Question. In your view, does DOD have appropriate access to technical data packages for weapons systems and software in development and sustainment?

Answer. I understand that many DOD programs consider IP to be a continuing challenge, especially for sustainment and upgrade activities happening later in the program life cycle. If confirmed, I will place greater emphasis on planning for data and software needs throughout the program life cycle, and will ensure such plan-

ning is happening earlier, most preferably during the competitive phases of a program.

Question. In your view, is it worth spending more money on programs earlier to obtain technical data packages, and if so, how could a fair price be determined?

Answer. I believe that planning for, and taking concrete steps to acquire, technical data and computer software should occur early in the program life cycle. By doing so, the Department should be able to capture IP resulting more effectively from its investments in technology development, and to leverage the competitive environment to more affordably acquire preexisting IP that has been developed and funded privately by industry. Additionally, this proactive approach to acquiring IP will better enable the Department to apply its cost and pricing expertise to competitive offers that meet programs long-term IP needs. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department has effective policies, guidance, and tools for planning and acquiring technical data and computer software earlier in the program life cycle.

Question. In your view, what methods does DOD have available to obtain data rights or data delivery on existing systems while still protecting legitimate industry needs?

Answer. DOD should develop IP strategies that incorporate strategic planning for long term needs, negotiation of flexible and tailored licensing arrangements, and the application of modular open systems approaches. These methods and approaches can effectively balance the needs of the Government and industry's IP interests, considering the investments of both parties. If confirmed, I will place a greater emphasis on tools and resources to facilitate early and continuous acquisition and product support planning, most preferably during the competitive phases of a program.

Question. In your view, how extensive is the issue of DOD inadequately performing data rights analysis, ordering, inspection, and performance, leading to improper limited rights assertions by industry?

Answer. I believe it is critical that the Department leverages its existing legal and contractual tools to ensure that IP is acquired and managed more effectively. If confirmed, I would seek to remove or mitigate impediments to doing so through a combination of improved workforce training and education, as well as addressing any needed changes to the governing regulations and DOD policies, as appropriate.

Question. In your view, how will the use of open systems architectures and acquisition strategies improve the Department's ability to modernize and sustain its systems?

Answer. I believe the combined implementation of best practices in modular open systems approaches (MOSA) and IP strategic planning is critical to improve the Department's posture for competitive and affordable sustainment and modernization of its systems. MOSA allows greater tailoring and flexibility when allocating IP rights to better balance DOD's and industry's return on investment in individual system components. Additionally, it is enabled more efficiently by best practices in digital engineering. If confirmed, I will identify and implement steps necessary to improve the Department's use of MOSA and execution of IP strategies in a manner that effectively balances the needs of DOD and industry.

Question. In your view, does the Department need a different approach to access technical data when dealing with primarily commercial companies?

Answer. I understand that DOD policy is generally to acquire the same data, software deliverables, and license rights provided to commercial customers, except in cases when DOD's specialized national defense needs require additional or specialized arrangements. In those cases, the Department should negotiate with the commercial vendors to develop licensing arrangements that better balance the operational and business interests of both parties. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department continues to develop tools and resources for licensing arrangements that balance the needs of DOD and industry for both commercial and noncommercial technologies.

REFORM OF THE PROTEST PROCESS

Question. To what extent do you think that the time required to settle protests warrants reform to protect the interests of both industry and the government?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the recent and relevant studies on protests to determine what, if any, additional changes should be made to protect the interests of both industry and the government.

Question. If confirmed, what recommendations, if any, do you have to improve the protest process?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with subject matter experts to gain a better understanding of challenges and opportunities that may improve the protest process for the Department and industry.

SMALL BUSINESS

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to increase the participation of small businesses in the defense technology and industrial base?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy and the Director of the Office of Small Business Programs, who have direct oversight over the Department's small business activities, to support their programs to increase the participation of small businesses in the defense industrial base.

Question. In your view, what are the biggest barriers that prevent small businesses from becoming prime contractors to the Department?

Answer. It is my understanding that some of the biggest barriers include difficulty navigating the defense acquisition process, navigating the complex structure of DOD, often lengthy procurement timelines from opportunity announcement to contract award, and limited access to information on upcoming procurement opportunities. If confirmed, I would work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy and the Director of the Office of Small Business Programs, who have direct oversight over the Department's small business activities, to help more small business become prime contractors to the Department.

Question. Do you believe the Department is using all available authorities to provide small businesses the opportunity to subcontract with existing prime contractors to ensure programs of record have access to the most advanced and effective technologies?

Answer. My understanding is that the Department of Defense manages various small business programs that assist Small Businesses with opportunities to subcontract with existing prime contractors. If confirmed, I will work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy and the Director of the Office of Small Business Programs, who have direct oversight over the Department's small business activities, to help identify any improvements in the way that the Department can utilize its small business authorities.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure that small businesses that provide goods and services to the Defense Logistics Agency are monitored and supported when facing financial pressures that challenge their viability?

Answer. I believe that the Department should do all it can to support small businesses facing undue financial pressures, while balancing the readiness and cash-flow needs of the Department. If confirmed, I would work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy, who has oversight over the Department's small business programs, and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment, who has oversight over the Defense Logistics Agency, to ensure that the Acquisition Community is doing its best to minimize undue financial burden on the small business community.

Question. What do you see as the benefits of diversifying the defense industrial base through more engagement with small and disadvantaged businesses?

Answer. I believe small business participation in defense procurements as prime and subcontractors is vital to the defense mission, competition, and the health of the defense industrial base (DIB). Small businesses spur innovation, represent the majority of new entrants into the DIB, and, through their growth, create a pipeline of the next generation of suppliers with diverse capabilities to support the DOD mission. They are essential to the Nation's economic prosperity as their ingenuity, agility, and capabilities are inextricably tied to the Nation's national and economic security.

Question. If confirmed, what role do you see for your office in identifying small businesses that should be monitored to ensure mergers and acquisitions involving those companies does not negatively impact competition and access in the commercial marketplace?

Answer. Defense industry mergers and acquisitions have a profound impact on the level of economic competition in the DIB. Competition within the DIB is critical to national and economic security, and increased competition is in the Department's best interest. If confirmed, I would work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy, who has direct oversight over the Department's merger and acquisitions monitoring program, to ensure that the Acquisition community best supports the Department's M&A objectives.

ACQUISITION WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Question. A well-trained and empowered acquisition workforce is a critical enabler in the implementation of acquisition reform and in the management of acquisition programs.

What is your assessment of the Department's acquisition workforce, both in terms of its capacity and capability? Does the Department have enough acquisition professionals with the right skills?

Answer. I believe in the exceptional talent of the Defense Acquisition Workforce. Over the past few years, the Department has diligently dedicated itself to revitalizing and transforming the acquisition workforce and modernizing the execution of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act. Should I be confirmed, my priority will be to comprehensively evaluate the outcomes of these concerted efforts.

Furthermore, I am committed to closely examining the specialized knowledge, skills, and functions of acquisition that are essential for the Department to provide cutting-edge capabilities to our warfighters. This entails an analysis of how we can best leverage the expertise of our existing workforce and upskill where needed, as well as developing strategies for attracting and retaining top-tier talent.

If confirmed, I will conduct a rigorous assessment of targeted capacity requirements and skill prerequisites that ensure the Department maintains an ample bench of skilled acquisition professionals to enable the consistent delivery of superior capabilities to maintain a distinct advantage for our warfighters.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure the acquisition workforce is fully trained on the new acquisition authorities and best practices, so that it can make informed decisions about when and how to use the different acquisition pathways and tools?

Answer. I believe close coordination with the Department's Acquisition Executives, functional leaders, and the Defense Acquisition University is key to ensuring the workforce is provided with an agile learning environment that meets the needs of today's workforce, including how to use different acquisition pathways and tools. Through DAU, nearly 160,000 acquisition professionals across all Military Services and Defense agencies have access to career-long learning and support, through courses acquisition professionals need to achieve DAWIA certification and other skill enhancing tools and techniques. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts across the Department to ensure the acquisition workforce is fully trained on new acquisition authorities and best practices.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to empower program managers to execute acquisition programs and hold them accountable for how their decisions contribute to program performance, including over the life of the system?

Answer. I believe program managers will be successful if they are empowered to execute their programs using all the available legal and policy authorities as well as functional support. This will enable them to meet the cost, schedule, and performance goals of their specific programs. If confirmed, I will exercise robust oversight to hold program managers accountable for program performance.

Question. What is your assessment of the Department's training, education, certification, and credentialing programs for the acquisition workforce?

Answer. Training and learning in new and emerging areas and throughout one's career, not just in the first few years on the job, is essential to deliver necessary capability to the warfighter. Additionally, the Defense Acquisition Workforce must be able to adapt to a variety of new and rapidly evolving threats. It is my understanding that DAU, the Services, and Components have been collaborating to better meet the training needs of the workforce. If confirmed, I will review such efforts to make sure we have effective planning and investments.

Question. In your view, should the Department look at ways to integrate commercially provided or academic credentials to complement and enhance DOD provided training?

Answer. I believe the Department should consider and, where applicable, offer commercially provided and academic credentials to the Defense Acquisition Workforce. To that end, DAU has already established formal agreements with multiple commercial and academic institutions, such as Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, Skillsoft Precipio, Harvard Business School, and others. DAU currently offers thousands of courses from these institutions to complement and enhance its own DOD-unique training resources to the acquisition workforce, at no cost. Integrating external credentials can help our workforce diversify their skillsets and adapt to emerging technologies and methodologies, ensuring they remain competitive and effective in their roles.

Integrating commercially provided or academic credentials to complement and enhance DOD-provided training is a prudent approach that can significantly benefit the Department of Defense, particularly in the acquisition domain. By leveraging partnerships with trusted providers and carefully managing the integration process, we can ensure our Defense Acquisition Workforce remains well-prepared and adaptable in an ever-evolving defense landscape. If confirmed, I would look to build upon these initiatives.

Question. In your view, what role should the Department play in ensuring that there is an adequate supply of technical talent available for the Department and industry partners to meet the challenges of the future?

Answer. The Department's role in securing an ample supply of technical talent for future challenges is critical. If confirmed, I will work to achieve this by strategically planning our workforce needs, investing in education and training initiatives, fostering innovation through R&D, streamlining recruitment, and prioritizing retention and career development. Collaboration with industry, academia, and diverse talent pools are essential, as is a commitment to lifelong learning and adaptability. Additionally, I support opportunities, such as the Defense Civilian Training Corps, to develop the next generation of acquisition leadership. If confirmed, I will regularly assess and refine efforts to ensure alignment with our mission and evolving demands of the future. By doing so, the Department is positioned (as are our industry partners) for success in addressing the challenges ahead.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to fully staff the Software Cadre to support software modernization across the Department?

Answer. I believe the most important resource of any organization is its people. Our acquisition workforce must be flexible in leveraging new, evolving software capabilities and technologies. If confirmed, I will work with the Services and Components toward enabling a fully staffed Software Cadre that supports the Department's software modernization strategy, which provides the approach for achieving faster delivery of software capabilities to gain a competitive advantage.

Question. What recommendations would you make, if confirmed, to improve the recruitment efforts of acquisition professionals by the Department?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to enhance the recruitment efforts for acquisition professionals in the Department through a comprehensive approach that includes collaborating with educational institutions and leveraging digital platforms. Barriers to entry can be broken down to allow for flexible career paths, to foster collaboration, and to collect feedback for continual improvement. By implementing these measures, the Department can attract a skilled and diverse acquisition workforce, ensuring the success of our mission. If confirmed, I would continue to support the Defense Civilian Training Corps (DCTC) that equips college scholars with the skills and knowledge necessary as a future DOD leader where they will innovate processes, policies, and methods to enable acquisition, adoption and transition new technologies into military capabilities.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to onboard more Highly Qualified Experts and scientific or professional personnel that have expertise in relevant technology fields to support DOD acquisition professionals?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize the strategic recruitment of Highly Qualified Experts (HQE) in cyber and technology fields to strengthen the DOD's acquisition capabilities and support the National Defense Strategy. I will emphasize that talent can be found both within the Department, as well as identify industry leaders to help build the HQE cadre. Additionally, by streamlining recruitment, offering competitive compensation, promoting diversity, professional development, and strategic partnerships, the Department can attract and retain top talent. In addition, to improve employee satisfaction, flexible work arrangements should be explored, feedback encouraged, and resources should be resourced appropriately.

Question. If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to improve the effectiveness of the Defense Acquisition University?

Answer. If confirmed, I will evaluate DAU's ongoing efforts to transform its training content and delivery methods, while ensuring its products and services are aligned to the strategic needs of the acquisition workforce. It is my understanding that DAU is working to build enduring, productive relationships with the Services and Components as part of a modernized implementation of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act. The skills and abilities of the workforce are critical to ensuring our warfighters have necessary capabilities on the battlefield, and if confirmed, I will review the steps being taken to provide for upskilling and talent development.

Question. In your view, how effective has the Department been in utilizing the Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Account (DAWDA) to support its overall talent management initiatives?

Answer. The Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Account is provided for the sole purpose of recruitment, training, development, and retention of qualified acquisition talent. It is a powerful tool in the competition for talent. DAWDA has effectively supported a wide-range of robust talent management initiatives across DOD since 2009 and can be credited for eliminating a gap of mid-career (10–20 years of experience) personnel.

If confirmed, I am committed to assessing the DAWDA's effectiveness in collaboration with Acquisition Executives. This assessment will help identify areas of success and improvement to better align the DAWDA with the Department's talent management goals. Optimizing use of DAWDA resources can support modern talent management and development tools and training for the acquisition workforce.

Question. If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to assess and ensure the DAWDA is adequately resourced to meet the needs of the Department?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the process to assess acquisition workforce requirements and ensure planned budget levels are requested to meet requirements to continue with modern talent development initiatives. I will also ensure DAWDA resources are prioritized and allocated to the greatest need.

Question. If confirmed, how would you engage with the congressionally mandated Acquisition Innovation Research Center (AIRC) to perform research on acquisition issues of interest, and to enhance a future workforce for defense acquisition?

Answer. DAU is a direct interface with the Defense Acquisition Workforce and the acquisition challenges they face. If confirmed, I will ensure DAU continues to collaborate with the AIRC to share information and identify research areas on issues of interest to the workforce. DAU and AIRC will continue to co-produce Quarterly Research Forums where AIRC's principal investigators share their research with and receive feedback directly from the workforce.

NUNN-MCCURDY PROCESS

Question. The Nunn-McCurdy process, as established by section 2433 of title 10, United States Code, has not been revisited since Congress and the Department began implementing significant acquisition reforms 5 years ago.

Given recent acquisition reforms, in your view, is the Nunn-McCurdy process still an appropriate and effective mechanism for reporting to Congress on troubled acquisition programs?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the Nunn-McCurdy process and recommend changes, as appropriate. This process has been a significant and important process for Major Defense Acquisition Program reporting and accountability and is utilized for metrics and analysis within the Department.

Question. In your view, are changes needed to the Nunn-McCurdy process, such as expanding its scope beyond major defense acquisition programs or adjusting the thresholds for significant and critical breaches?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the Nunn-McCurdy process to determine if changes are necessary to expand the scope beyond MDAPs.

Question. If confirmed, what principles would guide your thinking on whether to recommend terminating a program that has experienced significant or critical cost growth under Nunn-McCurdy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will use the principles of the Nunn-McCurdy law along with data driven analyses to inform my recommendation regarding termination. Program decisions must balance between delivering warfighter capability and controlling cost growth. Programs experiencing significant or critical cost breaches must present a credible plan to meet performance requirements at acceptable cost levels.

FOREIGN MILITARY SALES

Question. The Foreign Military Sales (FMS) process has long been criticized for being too slow and cumbersome to meet the needs of our allies and partners. There are ongoing efforts in Congress, the Defense Department, and the State Department to improve the process, especially considering the Ukraine conflict and reequipping our NATO allies, providing equipment for Taiwan, and the Trilateral Security Partnership Between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. (AUKUS).

In your opinion, what are the primary hurdles to streamlining the FMS process?

Answer. The Department of Defense Foreign Military Sales Tiger Team identified six broad areas for improvement in the phases of the Foreign Military Sales process: improving understanding of ally and partner requirements; enabling efficient review of technology; providing allies and partners relevant priority capabilities; accelerating acquisition and contracting support; expanding defense industrial base capacity; and ensuring broad U.S. Government support. I fully concur with these findings.

Question. If confirmed, what recommendations do you have to address these hurdles?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the FMS Continuous Process Improvement Board, established as part of the Department's Foreign Military Sales Tiger Team review, and the Department of State, which is the U.S. Government's lead

on Foreign Military Sales, to address any hurdles that the Acquisition community can help overcome.

Question. In your view, what problems can DOD address on its own, and what problems require coordination with the State Department?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with colleagues in OSD Policy and counterparts in the Services to address any deficiencies in the FMS process that the Acquisition community can help improve.

Question. In your view, is there adequate data to be able to measure the time taken by the various steps in the FMS process to determine where there might be bottlenecks in the process?

Answer. I am aware that the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) maintains data on many aspects of the foreign military sales process. If confirmed, I would work closely with DSCA and the Services to ensure we are collecting the necessary data to monitor individual FMS cases, identify any patterns, and address bottlenecks.

INTERNATIONAL ARMAMENTS COOPERATION

Question. The Department conducts a number of activities that support International Armaments Cooperation (IAC) that are used to promote U.S. strategic goals. IAC is defined as cooperative research, development, test, and evaluation of defense technologies, systems, or equipment; joint production and follow-on support of defense articles or equipment; and procurement of foreign technology, equipment, systems, or logistics support. In addition to activities like information exchange agreements, defense trade, and cooperative logistics, the Department also funds activities that can be used to promote interoperability and joint development, such as the Defense Exportability Features (DEF) program, the Coalition Warfare Support Program, and the Foreign Comparative Test Program.

In your view, how effective have international armaments cooperation activities been in shaping and supporting broader DOD warfighting needs and priorities? Are there new approaches or activities we should consider to be more effective and strategic?

Answer. Across numerous positions in OSD Policy, and as Acting Deputy Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, I have seen first-hand that IAC activities provide opportunities to share in the identification, development and advancement of military capability that support coalition operations and enable our international partners to provide for their defense and create stability within key regions of the world. If confirmed, I will work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy, who has oversight over IAC activities, to ensure that the Acquisition community supports this important mission.

Question. Based on current experiences with the conflict in Ukraine, what recommendations would you have, if confirmed, to help streamline or improve our security cooperation, foreign military sales, and cooperative logistics processes to be more responsive to rapidly changing security situations?

Answer. The Department of Defense has demonstrated incredible speed and agility in providing critical security cooperation to Ukraine to meet its requirements over the course of the conflict. If confirmed, I look forward to working with stakeholders across the Department of Defense and interagency to capture lessons learned from the Ukraine experience that we can apply to improve security cooperation and cooperative logistics processes moving forward.

Question. In your view, how effective have newer initiatives like the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) with India, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or Quad), or the AUKUS initiative been in supporting our defense posture, and are there recommendations for improving those activities that should be considered to make them more effective?

Answer. As the Director for South Asia policy in 2014, I worked with colleagues in the office of International Armaments Cooperation to establish the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative with India as a means to building habits of cooperation across our respective bureaucracies and industry partners. In my view, initiatives like DTTI, the Quad and AUKUS provide valuable opportunities to enhance international cooperation, strengthen alliances and partnerships, and improve industrial base cooperation. If confirmed, I look forward to exploring the details of the work underway and seek opportunities to enhance outcomes and identify new opportunities for partnership.

Question. If confirmed, how would you manage your relationship with USD (Policy), the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), and the Defense Technology Security Administration (DTSA) in structuring international cooperation activities?

Answer. I have worked in and with USD (Policy), DSCA, and DTSA throughout my career. If confirmed, I will leverage my close personal relationships with senior officials throughout those organizations, as well as my deep understanding of their roles and missions, to ensure ASD/A and the broader acquisition community is fully aligned and supportive of the Department's international cooperative activities.

Question. If confirmed, do you see opportunities to streamline those relationships to reduce the time to get agreements in place so actual cooperative work can begin more quickly?

Answer. If confirmed, I will build bridges to OSD Policy, DSCA and DTSA to bring the Acquisition community into policy discussions of potential cooperation with allies and partners at the front end, so that the acquisition community is poised to provide robust and expeditious support to cooperative work.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Question. In responding to the 2018 DOD Civilian Employee Workplace and Gender Relations survey, approximately 17.7 percent of female and 5.8 percent of male DOD respondents indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment and/or gender discrimination by someone at work in the 12 months prior to completing the survey.

If confirmed, what actions would you take were you to receive or otherwise become aware of a complaint of sexual harassment or discrimination from an employee of the ASD(A)?

Answer. If confirmed, I would send a clear message to the workforce from the outset that there will be zero tolerance for sexual harassment or gender discrimination. I would further ensure employees are made aware of their rights, options for reporting, and the resources and recourse available to them should they experience sexual harassment or gender discrimination. I would reinforce this important message with my leadership team, and set a clear expectation of leaders throughout the organization to set a climate where such behavior is not tolerated. Should I become aware of any complaints within the organization, I would first ensure proper actions are taken through personnel processes. I would then undertake a more extensive messaging campaign, using direct communications and official correspondence to the workforce to reinforce the message that everyone deserves a safe and respectful work environment and behavior such as sexual harassment or discrimination will not be tolerated.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

Question. To exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive timely testimony, briefings, reports, records including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

in their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. Yes,

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TIM KAINE

DEFENSE CIVILIAN TRAINING CORPS

1. Senator KAINE. Ms. Abercrombie, what do you see as the potential for the Defense Civilian Training Corps to bolster the acquisition workforce and are there other modernization initiatives you think would complement the push for faster and more efficient acquisition processes?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. As I understand it, the Department has modeled the Defense Civilian Training Corps (DCTC) on the Reserve Officer Training Corps program for military officers. DCTC will recruit and comprehensively prepare the Nation's next generation of talent to be civilian professionals, ready to contribute with agile and innovative skills to address the acquisition community's most vexing technical, operational, and business challenges.

I am also aware of the new Acquisition Innovation Research Center (AIRC), which was established to address, accelerate, exploit and transition cutting edge practices into the Defense acquisition system. AIRC and DCTC form a foundation for the Department to meet the Nation's current threats and will establish a path for an agile, accelerated, and efficient acquisition system. If confirmed, I intend to assess and emphasize efforts being performed by the AIRC and implement DCTC and other workforce initiatives. I will also work with the Defense Acquisition University to leverage and accelerate acquisition workforce initiatives such as the Defense College Acquisition Internship Program, the Public Private Talent Experience, and Back-to-Basics.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ANGUS S. KING, JR.

SMALL BUSINESSES

2. Senator KING. Ms. Abercrombie, Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC), now known as Apex accelerators, have continued to usher along small businesses as they attempt to participate in Federal, State, and local government contracts. Can you convey how imperative these organizations are to DOD?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. From my perspective, APEX Accelerators have been a critical resource for small businesses and the Department by helping a wide range of businesses enter Federal contracting and navigate a complex DOD contracting process. If confirmed, I will work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy, and the Director of the Office of Small Business Programs, to ensure that the acquisition community continues to support and leverage the important work of APEX Accelerators.

ADDITIVE MANUFACTURING

3. Senator KING. Ms. Abercrombie, Large-scale Additive Manufacturing is becoming a possibility for the Department of Defense rapid production needs. Do you believe the establishment of an Additive Manufacturing University Affiliated Research Center (UARC) would be beneficial to growing and establishing this essential capability for DOD?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Expanding the Department's advanced manufacturing capabilities, to include additive manufacturing, will allow our forces to produce crucial

parts closer to the point of need, reduce manufacturing and transportation costs, and improve our ability to provide support in contested and disconnected environments. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering to review whether establishing an Additive Manufacturing UARC would be beneficial to grow this essential capability for DOD.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

FUTURE USE OF UNFUNDED PRIORITIES LISTS

4. Senator WARREN. Ms. Abercrombie, do you agree that if funding is needed for a project, it should be a part of the command or Military Service's budget?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. The Department's budget request process is an important part of the appropriations cycle and represents the Department's highest priorities. It is my understanding Congress created the unfunded priority list structure in 10 USC 222a, and that the Department supports efforts to repeal the requirement. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts within the Department to learn about their specific budget requests and will support the Department's efforts to repeal the requirement.

DEFENSE MERGERS

5. Senator WARREN. Ms. Abercrombie, what do you see as the major risks of further consolidation in the defense sector in terms of national security, innovation, and costs?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. In my view, while consolidation can have beneficial impacts—like preserving a capability that might otherwise disappear if a company went out of business—excessive consolidation in the defense sector can reduce innovation, increase costs to the Department, weaken our supply chains, and negatively impact U.S. national and economic security. I would point to the Department's 2022 Report on the State of Competition in the Defense Industrial Base for a fuller accounting of the major risks of further consolidation in the Defense sector, but I firmly believe that increased competition is generally in the Department's best interest.

6. Senator WARREN. Ms. Abercrombie, do you agree that Congress has a right to know how DOD assesses mergers and acquisitions in order to oversee how competition policies are being applied?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I agree that the Department should follow all applicable laws and policies regarding assessment of the national security impacts of mergers and acquisitions. I am aware that DOD works closely with the FTC and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to analyze the potential benefits and risks of cases impacting the Department and defense industrial base. If confirmed, I commit to working with colleagues in Industrial Base Policy to review proposed mergers and acquisitions as necessary to determine potential effects on acquisition and competition.

7. Senator WARREN. Ms. Abercrombie, what is your plan to promote competition in your role?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Competition is essential to U.S. national and economic security. If confirmed, I would work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy, who is charged with developing DOD policies for maintaining the Defense Industrial Base, and other stakeholders in the Department, to help the acquisition community foster competition in the industrial base by attracting smaller businesses, disadvantaged businesses, reducing regulatory barriers, and making sure that acquisition pathways are as navigable as possible.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN III

ALLEGANY BALLISTICS LABORATORY

8. Senator MANCHIN. Ms. Abercrombie, thank you very much for the conversation in my office last week, and one of the many topics we covered was the need to support our munitions industrial base. I'm proud to say that the most unique munitions manufacturing site in the United States exists in West Virginia. Allegany Ballistics Laboratory (ABL) is publicly owned by the Navy, which sets it apart from other privately owned facilities, but is unique from our public facilities in that it builds over 17 different types of munitions for each of our Military Services and allies, including: the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) that is used in our High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), which are having great effect in

Ukraine; the Patriot missiles that are used to defend our Forces and our allies around the world; the next-generation Precision Strike Missile that is replacing the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS); Hellfire Missiles; and the Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile. I've been discussing this unique, taxpayer owned, facility with Department leadership for the better part of a year now, and they've agreed that we need to invest in modernizing and expanding this facility. I will never support funding for a military capability just because it is in West Virginia, but only because it will benefit our warfighters. If confirmed, can you get back to my office within 3 months with a reasoning as to why the Department provided more than \$200 million to a purely private company, Aerojet Rocketdyne which has also had production and quality issues with their products, instead of investing in publicly owned infrastructure at ABL?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I understand how important the ABL facilities are to the success of delivering munitions to the warfighter. The work being executed at ABL is something to take pride in, and I would like to take the opportunity to celebrate the hard-working employees that support our Defense Industrial Base, in both the private and public sectors. I know that the Department has been working to identify all production constraints and bottlenecks to accelerated munitions production, including solid rocket motors. I look forward to engaging with you and your staff, if confirmed, to identify opportunities to support all production challenges and identifying the potential resourcing and mitigation options to ensure the continued success of these facilities.

9. Senator MANCHIN. Ms. Abercrombie, do I have your personal commitment to make a trip to ABL within 3 months of your confirmation?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to visit ABL as soon as possible.

COMMERCIAL COST COMPARISON OF DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PURCHASES

10. Senator MANCHIN. Ms. Abercrombie, are you familiar with the language Senator Warren and I secured in section 803 of the Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA? This language was specifically included to give the Department of Defense (DOD) a very simple tool in contract negotiations, the ability to require the commercial cost of an item that is being sold to DOD.

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I am familiar with the Section 803 Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA language and appreciate its importance in helping ensure the Department pays a reasonable price for contracted commercial items. As I see it, this language provides Department contracting officers the ability to accomplish two important goals: making accurate commercial product determinations and determining price reasonableness for military-unique products proposed as commercial.

Contracting officers will now be able to require offerors to provide important product information that contracting officers can use to make accurate commercial product determinations more quickly. Additionally, the language requires offerors to provide sales data and, in some cases, cost data that contracting officers can analyze to ensure they pay a reasonable price, which is critically important.

11. Senator MANCHIN. Ms. Abercrombie, if confirmed, this is the exact type of common-sense authority I hope you will ensure is used throughout the Department. Can you comment on whether or not this authority has been used in any current contract negotiations the Department is undertaking?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I certainly support Section 803 and if confirmed will strive to ensure Department contracting officers are empowered to use this language to the maximum extent. At this time, I am not sure if any Department contracting officers have used this language in contract negotiations, but this is something I will take a personal interest in, prioritize, and champion.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARK KELLY

SOFTWARE CENTRIC CAPABILITIES

12. Senator KELLY. Ms. Abercrombie, as our military capabilities become more advanced, many of our new capabilities will be software centric. Due to the constant evolution of new capabilities, some of these programs will remain almost continuously in research, development, and procurement at the same time. This means that iterative improvements will need to be baked into the acquisition plan and funded in a way that supports that continuous process. How do you think DOD should approach this challenge?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. It is my understanding the Department recently updated its acquisition policies to promote adaptive, tailored approaches such as the Software Acquisition Pathway for iterative software development. This allows DOD acquisition programs to work closely with the requirements community to ensure capability is delivered in a more timely manner to meet warfighter needs. If confirmed, I will work with various DOD stakeholders to champion the delivery of military capabilities enabled by software centric solutions.

13. Senator KELLY. Ms. Abercrombie, do you think existing policy can keep up with this challenge?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I will work with DOD stakeholders to apply lessons learned in implementing the recent adaptive acquisition pathways, including the software acquisition pathway. I will ensure the Department understands how A&S policy and guidance are effective in achieving mission success in acquisition programs. I will also assess whether any additional policy changes may be required.

14. Senator KELLY. Ms. Abercrombie, is there policy that needs to change to reflect the changes in development cycles?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I am not aware of policies that might need to be altered to reflect changes in the development cycle, but if confirmed I will examine the effectiveness of existing acquisition policies that are aimed at continuous, iterative delivery of capability to meet warfighter needs. If I determine changes are necessary to acquisitions policies to be more responsive, I will not hesitate to advance those changes.

15. Senator KELLY. Ms. Abercrombie, do we need to consider a new funding approach to keeping pace with the rapid change of new software technology?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. It is my understanding the Department has been piloting several approaches related to funding software technology development, such as the BA-8 pilot. If confirmed, I look forward to exploring how the Department might implement related recommendations from the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) Commission.

EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO AUTONOMOUS CAPABILITIES

16. Senator KELLY. Ms. Abercrombie, the Services are all working on autonomous capabilities: the Army has Optionally Manned Fighting Vehicles and Robotic Combat Vehicles; the Air Force is working on Collaborative Combat Aircraft; and the Navy is developing unmanned surface and underwater systems. These are important capabilities that will change the way our military fights in the future—and can decrease risks to the men and women who serve. These programs will need to tackle many of the same challenges as they develop. If confirmed, what ideas do you have for how we can facilitate and encourage better collaboration across the Services in the area of autonomy?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Autonomous capabilities will provide the Joint Force with critical pathways to operational success while decreasing risk to our warfighters. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Department of Defense's Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office (CDAO) to further policy and solutions for autonomous capability acquisition in close coordination with the Services, Joint Staff, DOD CIO, and USD(R&E).

17. Senator KELLY. Ms. Abercrombie, how should we ensure the Department is taking lessons onboard as we go so that each Service is learning from each other?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring lessons learned from recent rapid acquisition efforts, such as the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and security assistance to Ukraine, are shared across the Department, and incorporated into future acquisition strategies to better meet the demands of the warfighter and stay ahead of our peer competitors. I understand that A&S has already made progress in this area, for example by creating multiple Competitive Advantage Pathfinders, which are designed to identify processes that can be scaled to overcome typical transition barriers and accelerate critical capabilities into fielding. If confirmed, I would look to build on this effort.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR M. MICHAEL ROUNDS

SPECTRUM

18. Senator ROUNDS. Ms. Abercrombie, I am very concerned about the impact auctioning off the spectrum's 3.1–3.45 GHz band would have on the Department's capabilities, readiness, and training. Every senior defense official I have asked said they could not share the band without negatively impacting our capabilities and training. Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro stated, and Vice Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Lisa Franchetti confirmed, it would take decades and over \$260 billion before the Navy would be fully mission capable if forced to share that portion of the spectrum. Dr. John Plumb, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy, stated that if the Space Force were to vacate the S-band in that range, it would cost a minimum of \$120 billion and take at least 20 years.

Based on your knowledge of this issue and the testimony of senior uniformed officers, what would be your advice to the Secretary of Defense on auctioning off or sharing all or some of the 3.1–3.45 GHz portion of the spectrum?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Use of electromagnetic spectrum is fundamental to both our national security and economic strength. Within the 3.1–3.45 GHz band, DOD relies on hundreds of air-, sea-, and land-based systems for a wide range of missions. I am aware that DOD, in coordination with the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the military services, other Federal agencies, and industry, conducted a study on the feasibility of Federal and commercial entities sharing spectrum in accordance with the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. I understand DOD continues coordination with the White House, Department of Commerce, and other Federal stakeholders on next steps in the process.

If confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, I commit to working with my colleagues across the Department and with interagency partners to ensure DOD maintains capabilities crucial to our national defense and invests in advanced technologies to preserve our innovative edge.

19. Senator ROUNDS. Ms. Abercrombie, in your view, how would sharing or vacating that portion of the spectrum impact our national security?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. It is my understanding that the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act directed DOD to study the potential effects of, and the necessary conditions for, sharing that band of spectrum with non-Federal users. If confirmed, I will work within DOD and with our interagency partners to ensure our military has access to spectrum to perform all missions.

FOREIGN MILITARY SALES REFORM

20. Senator ROUNDS. Ms. Abercrombie, there continues to be delays in the provision of weapons and equipment to our partners and allies, and a years-long foreign military sales (FMS) backlog. What do you see as the primary challenges to improving the timeliness of delivery of the equipment and services in the FMS backlog and are additional authorities needed to help solve this problem?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I expect to prioritize FMS reform, leveraging my experience in security assistance to streamline the process and provide timely delivery of much needed capability to our allies and partners. I will support establishing contract award standards and metrics and will develop associated process maps to monitor the FMS prioritization and award process. I will review options to expand our ability to support exportability work.

I understand that the Department is also developing a comprehensive strategy to incentivize DIB investment in production capacity and building surge capability for high-demand, low-supply platforms, systems, munitions, and services. If confirmed, I expect to examine suggestions for incorporating partner nation FMS requirements into the acquisition process sooner.

ACQUISITION MODERNIZATION

21. Senator ROUNDS. Ms. Abercrombie, Ukraine, Taiwan, and other international security challenges have revealed the urgent need for U.S. defense capability at scale. We continue to see limitations to the U.S. defense industrial base (DIB) and concerns about limited manufacturing capacity. What is the DOD doing to diversify and expand the DIB, reduce over-reliance on single-source suppliers, and mitigate supply chain vulnerabilities?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I understand the Department of Defense is working to ensure access to a secure and resilient industrial base to support the war fighter by building a resilient industrial and supply chain ecosystem called for by the National De-

fense Strategy. Modernizing the industrial base and supporting supply chains will require increasing partnerships with commercial industry and our international partners. If confirmed, I will work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy to better understand our supply chains and mitigate vulnerabilities.

22. Senator ROUNDS. Ms. Abercrombie, to what extent is DOD coordinating with State Department to work with our international partners in order to leverage the current historic demand signal for critical munitions and equipment into increased DIB production capacity?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. It is my understanding the Department of Defense is working closely with the Department of State to ensure the United States is poised to meet our international partners' requests for defense articles. As one example, per Section 51 in the Arms Export Control Act, the Department of Defense consults with the Department of State prior to purchasing any critical munitions or equipment through the Special Defense Acquisition Fund. When evaluating a potential purchase, the Department evaluates historical and expected sales, how the purchase will impact the defense industrial base, and whether the procurement will enhance U.S. force readiness by reducing the need to divert critical munitions and equipment from DOD stocks to support urgent international needs. If confirmed, I will work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base policy, colleagues in OUSD(P), the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, and the Department of State, as well as with industry to ensure DIB production capacity meets U.S. and partner requirements.

23. Senator ROUNDS. Ms. Abercrombie, how can the Department lean-in on successful rapid acquisition authorities and apply them at a larger scale across the Department?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. It is my understanding that the Department is actively utilizing the authorities provided by the Congress, including authorities for rapid acquisition pathways such as Urgent Capabilities, Middle Tier, and the agile policy for the Software Pathway. It uses these rapid acquisition authorities both independently and in combination with existing authorities like Major Capability Acquisition, to speed our responsiveness to the warfighter. If confirmed, I will ensure programs are appropriately and effectively utilizing these pathways, both independently and in coordination with one another. I will also work with Congress to ensure we find the most efficient way to scale these authorities to ensure application across the Department.

24. Senator ROUNDS. Ms. Abercrombie, what steps can DOD take to foster greater innovation within the DIB, particularly in critical areas such as emerging technologies, cybersecurity, and advanced manufacturing processes?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. The Department of Defense (DoD) can consider increased use of Other Transaction Authority to transition more DOD programs from R&D and successful prototype to production. Innovation could also be improved in the DIB by DOD developing sustainable technical requirements early in the product development cycle to help the acquisition process move "at the speed of relevance." The addition of non-traditional defense contractors will also help alleviate issues with sole source suppliers and the declining number of companies participating in defense innovation activities. Additionally, DOD can maintain and fully utilize DOD rapid acquisition organizations, such as the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell, to expedite the fielding of solutions in critical technology areas. These steps collectively aim to create an environment conducive to innovation within the DIB with a focus on DOD critical technologies.

If confirmed, I will work with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy on fostering greater innovation in industrial base areas critical to our national security, including emerging technologies, cybersecurity, and advanced manufacturing processes.

25. Senator ROUNDS. Ms. Abercrombie, from a broad perspective, what must DOD do to stockpile munitions and equipment, or keep production lines warm, in order for the United States to be prepared to defend its interests for longer than a very short (30-day) period of time?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I assess that DOD should send a strong and consistent demand signal to industry that it will pursue a healthy amount of munitions procurements over time, enabling sustainable support to the defense industrial base. This demand signal is what enables industry to increase its production capacity, keeping workers onsite, supply chains moving, and equipment maintained. If confirmed, I

will work with my team to support munitions procurement, including working to leverage existing authorities to ensure continued and timely deliveries to the warfighter.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JONI K. ERNST

USE OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

26. Senator ERNST. Ms. Abercrombie, there is a history of private sector frustration with the “not made here” attitude in DOD, and as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition (ASD(A)), you would be responsible for a defense acquisition system that enables speed to deliver capability at the point of need. If confirmed, what efforts are you going to make to better leverage the disruptive technologies being developed in the private sector that are years ahead of the traditional requirements process?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Better incorporating dual-use technology in defense acquisitions is crucial to meeting warfighters’ needs. I understand DOD has made progress in this area, with the A&S team more actively engaging with program offices, through an effort called “Acquisition Concierge Service” to promote non-traditional industry engagement and ensure programs understand potential commercial opportunities while also identifying challenges that can be addressed in the acquisition process or policy. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with Joint Staff and the Services to influence requirements for joint capabilities, particularly in the digital space, that are flexible enough to avoid solution lock. If confirmed, I commit to working across the requirements and acquisition community to expand knowledge of commercial opportunities and encourage adoption using the authorities of my position.

27. Senator ERNST. Ms. Abercrombie, how are you going to ensure disruptive technologies are integrated in current and future DOD systems?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. A challenge that coincides with the adoption of commercial technologies, is integrating disruptive technology into existing systems, concepts of operation and processes. A&S has created the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition Integration and Interoperability (DASD(AI2)) to address some of those challenges, specifically with an eye on CJADC2 but also looking across broader operational areas as part of the Department’s Integrated Acquisition Portfolio Reviews. As I understand it, the AI2 office has developed an initial methodology for measuring transition readiness and is actively applying it to ongoing USINDOPACOM joint efforts to rapidly experiment, integrate, test and field capability in theater on a timespan of months instead of years. The AI2 office is also championing an effort to enable faster integration and joint interrogability, through a DOD-wide Application Programming Interface strategy that ensures DOD software acquisitions are designed to securely share data between platforms and rapidly adopt new innovative software. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that this strategy, methodology and lessons learned from these efforts will be propagated to the broader community to improve integration of disruptive technology across the Department.

28. Senator ERNST. Ms. Abercrombie, how will your office plan to work with the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU)?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. DIU is the Department’s focal point for commercial technology adoption, and their recent reorganization to report to the Secretary will open more opportunities for collaboration with A&S. If confirmed, I will treat DIU as a partner in the execution of the A&S mission and will work closely with them to better understand available or emerging commercial solutions that can be applied to DOD’s most pressing challenges.

ACQUISITION REFORM

29. Senator ERNST. Ms. Abercrombie, as ASD (A), you play a major role in transitioning a defense acquisition that is currently expensive, slow, and burdensome, especially under FAR Part 12, which was designed to speed up and reduce timelines. If confirmed, what specific aspects of FAR Part 12 do you believe need reform or improvement?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. The Department must continue to take full advantage of available and evolving technological innovations in the commercial sector which includes improving the way we do business. FAR Part 12 allows for streamlined contracting procedures with regards to soliciting, response times, and contract terms and condi-

tions. By developing and implementing best practices using existing tools and authorities under FAR Part 12 the Department can maximize efficiency, reduce timelines, and minimize the burden and administrative cost to both Government and industry. If confirmed, I will work to review the previously submitted recommendations and initiatives to reduce timelines; determine if there are any additional recommendations that would improve our processes for commercial acquisitions; and identify what changes, if any, are necessary. Additionally, I will continue efforts to educate the acquisition workforce on strategies and techniques that help streamline the acquisition process.

30. Senator ERNST. Ms. Abercrombie, how will you engage with industry stakeholders, including contractors and suppliers, to gather input and feedback on proposed reforms to FAR Part 12?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Any reforms needed to FAR Part 12 will require feedback not only from the Department's acquisition workforce, but also from industry stakeholders. To ensure synergy between the Department and industry stakeholders we must have meaningful discussions about any improvements needed to FAR Part 12. If confirmed, I will to engage and encourage engagements across the DOD enterprise with industry to support transparency in sharing information and solicit feedback.

31. Senator ERNST. Ms. Abercrombie, how will you consider impacts on small businesses and encourage innovation in defense acquisition?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I believe small businesses and non-traditional businesses are essential to promoting competition and fostering innovation in the defense sector. Earlier this year the Department released its Small Business Strategy that outlines a Department-wide approach to increasing opportunities for small businesses through establishing a unified management approach to small business programs and activities, reducing barriers to entry, long-term planning for small business programs and increasing engagement and support of small businesses. If confirmed, I would work with my colleagues in the DOD Office of Small Business Programs and others across the Department and stakeholders outside the Department to ensure that the acquisition community strongly supports the needs of small and non-traditional businesses.

ANTI-TANK GUIDED MISSILE SHORTFALLS

32. Senator ERNST. Ms. Abercrombie, with current production lines stressed, and growing demands for munitions, what do you think DOD can do to help open the aperture to look at additional munitions or manufacturers to meet shortfalls and, in the process, attract more companies to manufacture in the United States?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. The National Defense Strategy emphasizes the importance of a robust defense ecosystem of manufacturers—including large and small businesses, non-traditional suppliers, and opportunities to “friend-shore” production where appropriate. The DOD recognizes that a diverse industrial base is necessary to ensure resiliency. For example, I saw that in late September, the Manufacturing Capability Expansion and Investment Prioritization office announced the establishment of the Munitions Campus pilot program. Partnerships such as these, between public and private sectors, can act as a force multiplier when it comes to buying down risk and finding insertion points for new technology. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with my colleagues within OSD Acquisition and Sustainment and in other agencies to make sure we are using every lever available to attract new entrants to the defense ecosystem.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

ACQUISITION

33. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, over the past decade, DOD has brought new companies into the sector. Most of these companies are stuck in what is called the “valley of death”. They receive small research or prototyping contracts for \$1 million or less, and often are successful, but never scale up into production. Do you believe DOD spreads dollars too thinly across companies seeking to enter the defense business?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Prototyping agreements are an important mechanism for the Department to do business with small businesses including new entrants to the defense marketplace and commercial companies. I also understand that helping small businesses cross the “valley of death,” between prototyping agreements and produc-

tion contracts is a major priority for the Department. If confirmed, I would work with the DOD Office of Small Business Programs to identify ways the acquisition community could help tackle this issue and support leveraging any programs that can help small businesses become prime contractors to the Department.

34. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, should DOD be “picking winners” based on execution of small contracts and, for expendable items like munitions, re-competing the projects yearly?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. In my view, the Department should continue taking steps to build resilience in the Defense Industrial Base, including by encouraging the entry of non-traditional suppliers, as well as by sending a consistent demand signal of intent to procure predictable amounts of munitions over time. If confirmed, I would work with colleagues across A&S and the Services to do so.

35. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, RAND and other research institutions have previously conducted studies focused on barriers faced by nontraditional DOD suppliers. Some of these barriers include lack of access to and communication from DOD, DOD’s complex and inefficient bid and selection process, the extra work and delays entailed in DOD’s administration and management of contracts, and the lengthy funding time line and delays in final payments. Do you agree that these barriers exist?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I will review the studies from RAND and other research institutions that have highlighted these barriers, and I will work with colleagues in A&S and other key stakeholders within the Department to pursue actions that will reduce the barriers for nontraditional suppliers. In addition, I will seek opportunities and assess expanding use of flexible contracting authorities to access capabilities from nontraditional sources.

36. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, if confirmed, what initiatives will you led to help nontraditional DOD suppliers overcome these previously mentioned barriers?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I understand the Department has instituted several initiatives over the last several years to assist nontraditional suppliers, such as Other Transaction Authority as a means of employing new business models. If confirmed, I will work closely with key stakeholders to assess the sufficiency of current actionable strategies to reduce these barriers.

FOREIGN MILITARY SALES

37. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, foreign partners—especially those facing the most serious security threats—are often prepared to assume more operational risk than America’s own Armed Forces. Whether in technology release or sale of non-programs of record, how should the Department account for this difference in risk tolerance levels?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I will work with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and other stakeholders in the Department’s FMS process to address discrepancies in risk tolerance levels.

38. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, would you support a requirement to develop alongside a standard FMS acquisition path a second “fastest acquisition path” that takes into account urgency, risk mitigation, and input from the foreign customer concerning its risk tolerance?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. As Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for Defense Policy and Arms Control at the National Security Council, and as former Acting Deputy Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, I understand well the challenges facing the acquisition community in executing FMS cases in a timely manner. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues in the Department to identify ways that the acquisition community can improve FMS execution.

39. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, valuable time is lost on FMS cases in the time between final letter of acceptance (LOA) and getting on contract due to DOD prohibitions on multiple modifications on a contract in a year. For this reason, an approved sale must sometimes wait another year from the last modification to get on contract. Meantime, over the year of waiting, the price may have changed enough to require the LOA process to begin again, adding more time. In some cases, it may change in size and scope enough to require a new congressional notification, adding more time still. Will you work with me to identify the legal authority for prohibiting

more than one contract modification per year and if there is none, making clear this is the case?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I am not aware of any constraints on the number of contract modifications set out in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) or Defense FAR Supplement (DFARS). I think the issue you are referencing is related to the timelines specified in contracts to exercise options or place orders. Aligning FMS sales with these dates allows for efficiencies within the process. These timelines are defined in each contract and should be clearly known by those developing the FMS requirements. The Department recently conducted an extensive review of FMS processes, policies, and practices, through an FMS Tiger Team. If confirmed, I will work with stakeholders across the Department, and with Congress to identify and implement potential improvements to the system, to include identifying key pressure points to help speed up the acquisition process.

40. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, if there is no law, regulation, or policy that prohibits multiple contract modifications per year, what do you think Congress could do to give contract officers reassurance that it is permitted?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I will work with Defense Pricing and Contracting to understand the extent to which Contracting Officers are already empowered in law, regulation, and policy to make acquisition decisions to include issuing multiple contract modifications, when necessary, on a specific contract.

41. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, in your opinion, are there practical or financial reasons for prohibiting more than one contract modification per year?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I will work to remove any barriers that introduce unnecessary delays to the FMS contracting process. I am not aware of any such prohibition, and I presume this is a matter of practice, practicality, and efficiency on the part of both government and industry to minimize the administrative burden and cost of executing modifications to existing contracts.

42. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, will you work with me to identify legislative fixes to address other delays in getting approved FMS cases on contract?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to identify potential improvements to the FMS process that may be addressed with changes to the law.

43. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, the FMS pipeline is filled with \$19 billion in arms contracted by Taiwan and scheduled for delivery. In the meantime, deliveries of similar systems are being made to other foreign customers. Will you explore options for adjusting production and delivery schedules in ways that puts Taiwan ahead of all others—except Ukraine and Israel?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I am aware that DOD is working with the defense industrial base to examine options to increase support to our allies and partners with the most acute national defense needs. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing our security cooperation with Taiwan to assess what policies or processes may need adjustment to prioritize capability delivery as necessary.

44. Senator SULLIVAN. Ms. Abercrombie, will you explore ways that, with appropriate levels of funding, the Department could facilitate the retooling of production lines to get Taiwan weapons faster?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. As Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for Defense Policy and Arms Control at the National Security Council, and as former Acting Deputy Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, I understand the challenges facing the acquisition community in executing FMS cases in a timely manner. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on leveraging existing authorities to accelerate FMS weapons production for priority partners.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

ACQUISITION

45. Senator BUDD. Ms. Abercrombie, more than any other time in history, it is essential that our warfighters acquire state-of-the-art and innovative commercial technologies to outpace our adversaries as they acquire and deploy new technologies. If confirmed, how will you approach this issue and ensure emerging capabilities are quickly transitioned and scaled for DOD use?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I will work to build upon DOD actions to date to overcome technology transition barriers, both from the military labs and the com-

mercial sector. I understand OUSD (A&S) has recently created multiple Competitive Advantage Pathfinders designed to identify processes that can be scaled to overcome typical transition barriers and accelerate critical capabilities into fielding. A&S is a key member of the Joint Fires Network transition team and is documenting lessons learned and best practices through the fielding of this capability. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that lessons are shared and incorporated into future acquisition strategies to meet the evolving demands of the warfighter and stay ahead of our peer competitors.

46. Senator BUDD. Ms. Abercrombie, in your written testimony, you State that your top priorities are “increasing the speed of acquisition; reducing barriers to attract non-traditional suppliers; and workforce development.” How do you plan to increase the speed of acquisition and what reforms to the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement would you recommend, if any? Please explain.

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I will assess whether the acquisition workforce is fully leveraging the flexible pathways available in the adaptive acquisition framework to maximize speed and seek to apply lessons learned where this has been successful. Additionally, I will work to identify and remove areas of unnecessary bureaucracy in the DFARS and to implement initiatives to speed up the acquisition process.

CRITICAL MUNITIONS

47. Senator BUDD. Ms. Abercrombie, if confirmed, do you commit to conducting a comprehensive review of critical munition acquisition programs within 60 days of confirmation, including, but not limited to, SM-6, Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM), Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM), Naval Strike Missile, Tomahawk, and torpedoes, and to provide the Committee on Armed Services with a briefing on your findings as well as the resources and authorities necessary to meet our defense requirements and international commitments, including, but not limited to, maximizing existing production lines and/or increasing productions lines of those critical munitions?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Secretary of Defense is provided timely analysis of acquisition programming and resourcing, including that of critical munitions, for U.S. and allied defense requirements in connection with preparation and presentation of the President’s Budget Request and I commit to ensuring the Committee is apprised of the latest analysis underpinning the President’s Request.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ERIC SCHMITT

FAIR AND OPEN COMPETITION FOR CYBERSECURITY CONTRACTS

48. Senator SCHMITT. Ms. Abercrombie, the Committee is concerned about fair and open competition generally and specifically in cyberspace. Because of that concern the Committee adopted section 143 of the Senate’s NDAA (S. 2226) requiring a report on the decision to exercise the option on an existing contract from a single vendor. Our concern is that a sole source contract when there are multiple vendors available might reduce the effectiveness of our cybersecurity capabilities. If you are confirmed, will you work with the Chief Information Officer in the Department to ensure that the Committee along with the other congressional Defense Committees receive requested information and briefings in this section?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Yes, if confirmed, I will work closely with the CIO and look forward to briefing or providing any requested information by this Committee and any other congressional Defense Committees.

HARPOON FOREIGN MILITARY SALES TO TAIWAN

49. Senator SCHMITT. Ms. Abercrombie, it is our understanding that it took the Navy from 2021 to April 2023 to get the Taiwan Harpoon Coastal Defense System on contract. For a matter that is urgent from a national security perspective, what is the Navy doing to help expedite processes such as this going forward?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I am not aware of all of the details of the contracting for the Taiwan Harpoon Coastal Defense System, but if confirmed, I commit to working with Navy on this critical matter. I also commit to working to streamline and accelerate the foreign military sales acquisition process, working with industry and stakeholders across the Department.

HARPOON AND STANDOFF LAND ATTACK MISSILE-EXPANDED RESPONSE SALE TO TAIWAN

50. Senator SCHMITT. Ms. Abercrombie, in addition to the Harpoon Coastal Defense System, there are two additional Taiwan Foreign Military Sales cases for Harpoon and Standoff Land Attack Missile-Expanded Response (SLAM-ER), a total of 195 cruise missiles, that have been approved by Congress and have signed Letters of Request, yet the Navy has still not awarded a contract for these urgently needed missiles to ensure that they can be delivered as soon as possible. What actions are you taking to expedite this process to ensure that these assets can be quickly delivered to Taiwan?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I recognize the critical importance to timely deliveries of these assets. It is my understanding, these LORs were signed in December 2022, and the Navy is pursuing an Undefined Contract Action, or other accelerated contracting initiatives to expeditiously award the contract for these missiles. If confirmed, I will work with the Navy to ensure that Taiwan F-16 aircraft will be ready to operate these missiles upon delivery.

FUTURE HARPOONS SALES TO TAIWAN

51. Senator SCHMITT. Ms. Abercrombie, I understand that the Taiwanese have also expressed an interest in an additional 100 Harpoon coastal defense cruise missiles. Will you ensure the Navy pursues the fastest possible path to get these missiles approved for FMS, on contract, and delivered to Taiwan?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. Yes, if confirmed, I will remain committed to ensuring the fastest path to additional Harpoon capability in Taiwan.

52. Senator SCHMITT. Ms. Abercrombie, is the fastest path for Taiwan to acquire Harpoons a new FMS case or an amendment to the 2020 FMS case?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. It is my understanding the decision regarding whether to Amend the 2020 Case or issue a new FMS case is ultimately Taiwan's decision. However, if confirmed, I would recommend amending the 2020 FMS Case to minimize administrative lead times.

F/A-18 PROCUREMENT SCHEDULE

53. Senator SCHMITT. Ms. Abercrombie, considering the Navy's significant strike fighter shortfall, I am concerned the Navy has yet to contract for the 20 additional F/A-18 Super Hornets that Congress appropriated for in fiscal years 2022 and 2023. Given this ongoing delay, do you assess that the Navy will still be able to procure the full complement of 20 F/A-18s with the funding that Congress appropriated?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. It is my understanding that the Navy intends to procure 20 aircraft; however, until negotiations are complete, it is premature to speculate whether the Navy will be able to procure the full complement of 20 F/A-18s with the funding that Congress appropriated. If confirmed, I will work with the Navy to ensure I am fully informed on the program.

F/A-18 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CONCERNS

54. Senator SCHMITT. Ms. Abercrombie, what is the impetus for the Navy's change in technical data requirements for this particular round of F/A-18 procurement considering the Navy's long history of procuring F/A-18s?

Ms. ABERCROMBIE. I have not previously been involved in this matter and am not aware of the details for what I suspect is a complex issue. If confirmed I look forward to the opportunity to understand these issues more thoroughly and to take appropriate action to ensure the Department can meet its sustainment, support, and readiness objectives for this weapon system.

[The nomination reference of Ms. Cara L. Abercrombie follows:]

NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT

PN671

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
May 30, 2023.

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

Cara L. Abercrombie, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Kevin Fahey.

_____, 2023.
(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 Ms. Cara L. Abercrombie, which was transmitted to the Committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

Bio

Cara L. Abercrombie

Education:

- Dartmouth College
 - August 1993-June 1997
 - Bachelor of Arts
- Tampere University, Tampere, Finland
 - August 1997-May 1998
 - Rotary Fellow/No degree pursued
- Princeton University School of Public and International Affairs
 - August 2001-May 2003
 - Masters in Public and International Affairs

Employment Record:

- The National Security Council, the White House (on detail from Office of the Secretary of Defense)
 - Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for Defense Policy & Arms Control
 - May 2022 - Present
- The National Security Council, the White House (on detail from Office of the Secretary of Defense)
 - Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Defense
 - January 2021-May 2022
- Office of the Secretary of Defense/Defense Security Cooperation Agency
 - Acting Deputy Director
 - April 2020-January 2021
- Office of the Secretary of Defense/Defense Security Cooperation Agency
 - President, Defense Security Cooperation University
 - November 2018-January 2021
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (on detail from Office of the Secretary of Defense)
 - Visiting Scholar
 - September 2017-September 2018

- Office of the Secretary of Defense
 - o Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for South and Southeast Asia
 - o June 2016-July 2017
- Office of the Secretary of Defense
 - o Principal Director for East Asia Policy
 - o June 2014-June 2016
- Office of the Secretary of Defense
 - o Special Assistant to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel
 - o March 2013-May 2014
- Office of the Secretary of Defense
 - o South Asia Director
 - o April 2011-March 2013
- Office of the Secretary of Defense
 - o Advisor for Human Capital Strategy to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
 - o May 2010-April 2011
- State at home parent / independent consultant
 - o May 2009-May 2010
- Office of the Secretary of Defense
 - o Defense Institution Building Policy Coordinator
 - o May 2008-May 2009
- Office of the Secretary of Defense
 - o India Country Director
 - o June 2005-May 2008
- Office of the Secretary of Defense
 - o Presidential Management Fellow
 - o September 2003-June 2005
- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
 - o Eurasia Program Officer
 - o September 1998-July 2001

Honors and Awards:

- 2023-2024: Rodel Executive Fellow (selected for inaugural cohort)
- 2022: Presidential Rank Award – Distinguished Rank Recipient
- 2014, 2014, 2016: Department of Defense Meritorious Service Award
- 2005: Department of State Meritorious Honor Award
- 2001: Princeton University John Parker Compton Memorial Fellowship with full tuition and living stipend
- 1997-1998: Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Fellowship (study in Finland)

[The Committee on Armed Services requires all individuals nominated from civilian life by the President to positions requiring the advice and consent of the Senate to complete a form that details the biographical, financial, and other information of the nominee. The form executed by Ms. Cara L. Abercrombie in connection with her nomination follows:]

118th CONGRESS, 2023 -- 2024
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
ROOM SR228
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510 6050
(202) 224 3871

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES QUESTIONNAIRE
INFORMATION REQUESTED OF CIVILIAN NOMINEES

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE: Answer all questions and provide all requested information. If more space is needed, attach an additional sheet of paper to the Questionnaire and cite the part of the Questionnaire and the question number (e.g., A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies. Unless otherwise required, an answer of "yes", "no", or "not applicable" is appropriate.

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART A

NOTE: Information furnished in this part of the Questionnaire will be made available in Committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearing, if any, and will be entered in the hearing record, also available to the public.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC

1. Name (Include any former names you have used): Cara Lisa Abercrombie
2. Position to which nominated: Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition
3. Date of nomination: 30 May 2023
4. Education (List names of secondary and higher education institution attended, type of school [vocational, technical, trade school, college, university, military college, correspondence, distance, extension, and on-line], dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted):

Dartmouth College, BA, 1997
Tampere University, Tampere, Finland 1997-1998 (Rotary Fellowship, no degree)
Princeton University, Masters in Public and International Affairs, 2003
5. Employment record (List all jobs held since college, or in the last 10 years, whichever is less, including the title or description of the job, name of

employer, location of work, and dates of employment. If the employment activity was military duty, show each change of military duty station as a separate period of employment):

March 2013-May 2014: Special Assistant to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, Department of Defense, Washington, DC

June 2014-June 2016: Principal Director for East Asia Policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC

June 2016-July 2017: Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for South and Southeast Asia, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC

September 2017-September 2018: Visiting Scholar, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC (on detail assignment from DOD)

November 2018-January 2021: President, Defense Security Cooperation University, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC

April 2020-January 2021: Acting Deputy Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC

January 2021-May 2022: Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Defense Policy, The National Security Council, the White House, Washington, DC

May 2022-Present: Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for Defense Policy & Arms Control, The National Security Council, the White House, Washington, DC

6. Government experience (List any advisory, consultative, honorary, and other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed in response to question 5, above):

Summer 1998 Department of State internship at the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki

7. Business relationships (List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, and of any educational or other institution): N/A

8. 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):

2019-Present: Co-Founder and Co-Chair, KPTN Alliance (With husband, lead informal support network for families with children who have a genetic mutation on the KPTN gene, like our daughter.)

2018-Present: Member, CURE Epilepsy Research Committee

2019-2022: Children's National Epilepsy Council

2019-2021: Treasurer for Arlington County Special Education PTA

2014-2022: Member, Princeton University Scholars in the Nation's Service Advisory Group

2006-2011: Term Member, Council on Foreign Relations

9. Political affiliations and activities:

a. If you have ever been a candidate for, or have been elected or appointed to a political office, list the name of the office(s); whether you were a candidate/elected/appointed; the year(s) during which you were a candidate, or in which the election was held or the appointment was made; and the term of office (if applicable): N/A

b. List all memberships and offices held in, and services rendered to, all political parties or election committees during the last 5 years: N/A

c. Itemize all individual political contributions of \$100 or more to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity during the past 5 years. List each individual contribution (not the total amount contributed to the person or entity) over this period:

ACTBLUE: 10/1/2020 - \$150

ACTBLUE: 10/1/2020- \$100

DSCC: 10/1/2020 - \$150

DSCC: 10/1/2020- \$100

10. Honors and awards (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements):

2023-2024: Rodel Executive Fellow (selected for inaugural cohort)
 2022: Presidential Rank Award – Distinguished Rank Recipient
 2014, 2014, 2016: Department of Defense Meritorious Service Award
 2005: Department of State Meritorious Honor Award
 2001: Princeton University John Parker Compton Memorial Fellowship with full tuition and living stipend
 1997-1998: Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Fellowship (study in Finland)

11. Published writings (List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, or other published materials that you have written or for which you served as co-author or editor, including articles and blogs published on the internet):

“Removing Barriers to U.S.-India Defense Trade,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, January 10, 2018
 “Russian Defense Deal Could Put India in Path of U.S. Sanctions,” *Axios*, March 28, 2018
 “Translating Defense Trade Into Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific,” *East Asia Forum*, May 20, 2018
 “Realizing the Potential of a Mature Strategic Partnership,” *Asia Policy*, January 2019

12. Speeches (Provide the Committee with two copies of any formal speeches you have delivered during the last 5 years—of which you have copies—in which you addressed matters relevant to the position to which you have been nominated). N/A

COMMITMENTS IN FURTHERANCE OF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

NOTE: In order to exercise their legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress timely receive testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch. A simple “yes” or “no” response is appropriate.

13. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate Committees of Congress? YES

14. Do you agree, if confirmed, to provide this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such

witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so timely? YES

15. Do you agree, if confirmed, to consult with this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? YES

16. Do you agree, if confirmed, to keep this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? YES

17. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this Committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? YES

18. Do you agree, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this Committee? YES

19. Do you agree, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? YES

[The nominee responded to Parts B-F of the committee questionnaire. The text of the questionnaire is set forth in the Appendix to this volume. The nominee's answers to Parts B-F are contained in the committee's executive files.]

SIGNATURE AND DATE

I hereby state that I have read and signed Parts A and B of the foregoing Senate Armed Services Committee Questionnaire, and that the information provided therein and in any document appended thereto, is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, current, accurate, and complete.

 _____

This 30th day of May, 2023

[The nomination of Ms. Cara L. Abercrombie was reported to the Senate by Chairman Reed on February 8, 2024, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on February 27, 2024.]

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