

TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF STEPHEN  
A. FEINBERG TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF  
DEFENSE

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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FEBRUARY 25, 2025  
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**TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF  
STEPHEN A. FEINBERG TO BE DEPUTY  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2025**

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Roger Wicker (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Scott, Mullin, Budd, Schmitt, Banks, Sheehy, Reed, Shaheen, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, and Slotkin.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER WICKER**

Chairman WICKER. The Committee will come to order. I thank our guest for being here. We are here this morning to consider the nomination of Stephen Feinberg, who has been nominated to be Deputy Secretary of Defense.

If confirmed, Mr. Feinberg would join the Department of Defense (DOD) during the most dangerous security environment since World War II. He would oversee the operations of the Department as it faces an emerging Axis of Aggressors. This dangerous coalition, which is characterized by military cooperation between China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea, presents a complex and far-reaching set of threats. Make no mistake: our enemies do not want a 21st century defined by peace and prosperity for the American people. Mr. Feinberg would be a crucial part of the team tasked with meeting those threats.

Unfortunately, the defense investments we have made during the cold war have long since evaporated. Defense spending is near record lows as a percentage of our gross domestic product (GDP), and all aspects of our military forces are now in dire need of repair or replacement.

Our Navy, once the envy of all seafaring nations, is now too small and too old to meet the growing demands of our combatant commanders. Our nuclear forces used to be the most robust and effective on the planet. Now they are decades older than their intended service lives. Our Air Force continues to shrink. We have yet to figure out how to scale innovative weapons into mass production. We have a \$200 billion backlog in basic maintenance that leaves our troops living and working in substandard conditions—

\$200 billion just dealing with living and working conditions, and I could go on.

Clearly, there are many things that need fixing at the Department of Defense. Fortunately, Mr. Feinberg has spent his entire career fixing things. I believe he will make a very fine Deputy Secretary of Defense.

Mr. Feinberg ran a highly successful, large organization for 3 decades, making him eminently qualified to run the Pentagon effectively. He brings extensive experience at the intersection of international economics and national security. Mr. Feinberg is remarkably attuned to the scope and scale of the challenges we face, as well as the opportunities we might exploit. His work on national defense is significant, and has ranged from Subic Bay acquisition to counter-Huawei efforts, and from spectrum sharing to hypersonic testing.

Unlike the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy does not often make high-profile policy speeches or travel around the world to engage with allies and adversaries. I do not expect to see much of Mr. Feinberg in the news if he is confirmed. But make no mistake: the Pentagon cannot function without a capable deputy.

In many ways, the deputy runs the day-to-day operations of the Department—driving the budget process, managing the principal staff assistance, and ensuring the Secretary of Defense is provided with data-driven and thoughtful options.

In Mr. Feinberg, President Trump has found a deputy who combines cutting-edge private sector skills with a thorough understanding of U.S. national security interests and the Department of Defense.

Today, we will hear Mr. Feinberg's views on issues facing the Department of Defense. I look forward to his thoughts on my proposals. Last year, I released a report entitled "21st Century Peace Through Strength." I hope this can serve as a blueprint to reinvigorate and rebuild our military.

Additionally, I released a Pentagon reform and innovation plan called "Restoring Freedom's Forge: American Innovation Unleashed." I hope it brings much-needed reforms and fundamentally changes the way the Department does business. We must cut red tape and get better weapons to our troops faster, all while maximizing taxpayer dollars.

I thank Mr. Feinberg and his family and his friends for being here today. I believe he has a lot to offer as the Department of Defense directs its focus to lethality, efficiency, speed, and accountability.

I now recognize my friend and Ranking Member Reed for any opening remarks he would like to deliver.

#### **STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED**

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Feinberg, congratulations on your nomination and welcome to today's hearing. I would also like to recognize your wife, Gisella, and your family that are here today. Also, welcome, Bill Hagerty. Senator, thank you. You will be introducing Mr. Feinberg.

Mr. Feinberg, you have been nominated to be Deputy Secretary of Defense. Traditionally, the Deputy handles the day-to-day oper-

ations of the Department, with a primary focus on managing the workforce and budget processes. The Deputy keeps the trains running on time. But also serves as the Department's main trouble-shooter for high-priority problems or decisions. This, in turn, allows the Secretary to focus on policy, strategy, and relationships abroad.

However, I am concerned that the Deputy's primary roles, workforce and budget management, have already been undermined by the chaotic actions we have seen over the past week. Last Tuesday, Secretary Hegseth ordered the Defense Department leadership to submit plans to slash spending by 8 percent annually. He suggested that these cuts would be covered largely by canceling DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion] and climate change programs. But I would note that these programs combined account for barely 0.1 percent of the annual budget. The cuts will go much, much deeper to systems, and you will be part of that process.

In addition, after pressure from DOGE [Department of Government Efficiency], Mr. Hegseth announced a plan to fire 5,400 Defense Department probationary employees beginning this week, and eventually to 5 to 8 percent of the entire workforce, as many as 75,000 workers across the country.

Let me make one point clear. The United States' greatest national security assets is not its ships, the aircraft, weapons, or technology. Our greatest security asset is our people. We have the most professional and dedicated defense workforce in the world to complement the greatest and most lethal fighting force in the world. The men and women who serve our military, both in uniform and as civilians, are among the most skilled and valuable professionals in the country, and they serve in the Department of Defense not because it is a lucrative or easy career. They do so because they care about the mission and protecting their fellow citizens. In a word, they are patriots. They are not opponents; they are patriots.

That is why I am so disturbed by the Trump administration's apparent animosity toward that. Arbitrarily firing tens of thousands of workers and slashing the defense budget will not create efficiency in our military. It will cripple it.

This Committee has always advocated for cutting wasteful spending at the Department of Defense, but tough budget decisions should be based on facts and analysis, not reckless layoffs. Such actions will harm our economy and industrial base and will be felt in every State, not just inside the Pentagon. Defense civilians work in communities around the country, at shipyards, military bases, depots, manufacturing sites, schools, and research centers.

Mr. Feinberg, if you are confirmed you will be responsible for managing the fallout from these budget and personnel cuts. At a time when we face unprecedented threats from China, Russia, and other adversaries, you will need to find a way to balance these reductions while also ensuring the Department has the resources it needs to achieve current missions and invest in modern technology. You will need the expertise of these civilians who now are in the fear of losing their jobs, without cause, or you will have to rely on contractors or military personnel to fill their cover work, which in the past has proved only to degrade readiness and drive up costs. I hope you will explain to this Committee how you intend to resolve

these contradictory demands while ensuring the Department of Defense accomplishes its mission.

Finally, I feel compelled to take a moment to address the firings of senior military leaders this weekend. I am deeply troubled that these firings appear to be part of a broader campaign by President Trump and Secretary Hegseth to politicize the military. I salute General CQ Brown, Admiral Lisa Franchetti, General James Slife, and General Jennifer Short for their outstanding service. Each of them have had brilliant careers and have led with great courage, honor, and distinction. We all owe them a debt of gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

However, the timing of these dismissals and the lack of any explanation for why risks politicizing the military and sending a chilling message to the ranks that political loyalty to President Trump supersedes loyalty to the Constitution.

Mr. Feinberg, these actions will also cause issues for you, if confirmed, because the Deputy Secretary of Defense works closely with the Vice Chiefs of the Joint Staff and the Services, most of whom are now either relieved of duty or covering two jobs. This will make it difficult for you to get the focus and time needed from these officers to address the difficult problems facing the Department.

I am most alarmed, however, by Secretary Hegseth's dismissal of the Judge Advocate Generals of the Armed Forces. These officers, known as TJAGs, are among the most senior uniformed lawyers in the military, strictly apolitical, and they have a fundamental role in ensuring that balanced, lawful counsel is part of any military policy discussion. The TJAGs provide legal oversight that spans military justice, operational law, administrative compliance, and U.S. compliance with the law of armed conflict. We expect the TJAGs to always provide their best military advice, regardless of politics.

These firings, along with the firings of the inspectors generals, should alarm everyone about the President's commitment to the rule of law, especially for the military. Laws, rules, and regulations are of utmost importance in an institution with an enormous budget and a lethal mission. If adherence to the law becomes option, the job of the Deputy Secretary becomes infinitely more difficult.

Mr. Feinberg, if confirmed, you may be one of the most important advocates for our military servicemembers and defense civilians within the Department of Defense. I hope you understand the responsibilities that come with your position, and that you will commit to speaking truth to power for the sake of our security. I hope you will also give us your assurances that you will communicate regularly and be transparent with this Committee. A close bipartisan relationship has always been the hallmark of this Committee in dealing with the Department of Defense.

Thank you for stepping forward to lead at a critical time for our Nation, and I look forward to your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Reed. We are now joined by our distinguished colleague and friend, Senator Hagerty, of Tennessee, who will make introductory remarks for our nominee. Senator Hagerty.



Senator HAGERTY. Thank you, Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Reed. I want to let you know how much I appreciate you holding this important nomination hearing today.

It is a real privilege for me to introduce my good friend, Steve Feinberg. Steve is President Trump's nominee to be our Deputy Secretary of Defense. During the first Trump administration, from 2018 to 2021, Steve chaired the President's Intelligence Advisory Board. There he brought a fresh perspective and provided expert advice on a range of challenge that confronted U.S. national security.

Before his nomination, Steve was co-CEO [Chief Executive Officer] and Chief Investment Officer of Cerberus Capital Management, a global investment firm that he co-founded in 1992, and today manages some \$68 billion of capital. At Cerberus, Steve spent 34 years investing in, fixing, and operating a variety of businesses, including those related to national defense and the U.S. intelligence community.

Steve is a patriot with a great heart. One of the many things that sets Steve apart is his strategic vision and his willingness and desire to invest in ways that not only create and grow value for his investors but also advance U.S. national security interests.

I want to quickly share a powerful story based on my own personal experience with Steve's leadership. When I served as United States Ambassador to Japan, I discovered that two Chinese firms were attempting to acquire the bankrupt Hanjin shipyard at Subic Bay in the Philippines. Subic Bay had previously served as a United States naval base, with a deepwater shipyard that is quite strategically located on the South China Sea.

For various reasons, the International Development Finance Corporation and other parts of the U.S. Government were not in a position to engage nor to help us solve this problem. So I engaged with top officials in the Trump administration and the governments of Japan and the Philippines, as well as with top actors in the private sector, and in specific, with Steve Feinberg and Cerberus.

Working together, we assembled an ad hoc, public-private solution to this problem and thwarted China's effort to acquire this very strategic port. Thanks to leadership from the Trump administration and Steve Feinberg and his team, we succeeded. Today Hanjin shipyard is known as Agila Subic shipyard, and it is now owned by American investors.

As a result, U.S. and allied firms have a joint presence there. For example, HAD Hyundai, a South Korean firm, will build and maintain vessels at the shipyard, and SubCom, a U.S.-based undersea cable firm, is advancing projects in the region from that location. United States Military and the Armed Forces of the Philippines also have a significant presence there now.

If Steven's team had not stepped up to solve the problem, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) today would likely possess a vital piece of strategic infrastructure in the South China Sea, and the threats to the security of the United States and our partners would be enormous as a result.

At Cerberus, Steve also worked hard on another issue that I dealt with firsthand as United States Ambassador to Japan, and

that is helping the United States and our partners counter China's threat in 5G telecommunications by investing in commercial alternatives to Huawei and other Chinese telecom companies. Here again, Steve recognized a strategic challenge to the United States and sought to counter and minimize the influence and access that China could gain from control over spectrum and telecommunications infrastructure.

On that note, I want to commend the Committee for its strong support of the Defense Department's efforts to accelerate adoption of 5G and ORAN technologies in order to provide strategic advantages to the warfighter, including by directing the Pentagon to establish a Secretary of Defense 5G cross-functional team to accomplish this objective.

We could not have addressed these problems without Steve Feinberg, an outsider with a fresh perspective, who, at the same time, knows how to work on the inside while bringing innovation and ingenuity to the table. Steve, if confirmed, will do an outstanding job as the Pentagon's second-highest-ranking civilian official.

Steve understands the mission. He will leverage his leadership, his strategic thinking, his deep knowledge, his decades of experience, and his vast professional network, as well as his willingness to listen and learn, and his decisiveness to improve the Defense Department. Just as he did at Cerberus for the past 34 years, Steve will work his heart out every day at the Department of Defense. He will ensure that the building, its management, its operations, and its programs run better and more efficiently, and he will focus on the Department's goal of providing decisive, strategic operational and tactical advances to the warfighter.

Steve Feinberg is the right man for this job. I look forward to his testimony today and to working with my colleagues to advance his nomination as quickly as possible. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much, Senator Hagerty. We would love to have you stay with us all morning, but perhaps you have other engagements. So feel free to go, and you have our thanks.

Mr. Feinberg, welcome, and you are now recognized for your testimony.

#### **STATEMENT OF STEPHEN A. FEINBERG TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**

Mr. FEINBERG. Thank you, Senator Hagerty. Your words are too kind. I very much appreciate it. I would like to thank Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Senator Reed, and all the distinguished Senators on the Committee for this opportunity to speak in front of you today. It is a real honor. I would like to thank the President of the United States, President Trump, for his nomination, giving me this great opportunity to serve our great Nation.

While the United States has all types of threats today, from North Korea to Russia to Iran, by far our biggest threat and most challenging is China. China is the first nation we have ever competed with that has both a great economy and a great military. China's entire private sector is fully committed in supporting that military development, and as such, they effectively have unlimited

funding. China is incredibly determined, they feel a great sense of urgency, and they are fully dedicated to becoming the strongest nation in the world and having dominance over the United States.

This is coming at a time when the United States has significant shortages in both our national security, many areas from weaknesses to shortages to problems. Chairman Wicker outlined so many of these in his opening remarks. We have shortages, obviously, in shipbuilding, nuclear modernization, aircraft development, cyber defense, hypersonics, counter-space, defending our satellites, counter-drones, defending against drone attacks, and so forth. There are so many more. Our workforce is challenged. Fabrication and batteries, two major areas of our industry, we are relying on China for.

So a lot of big challenges that we have to face, and it is all coming at a time when our budget is challenged, when all the services do not have enough money to meet all our current and future needs.

However, there is some good news here, is DOD, Pentagon, there is great opportunity to improve our cost structure, our efficiency, our operations, to really save a lot of money, that could be plowed into mission. We do not have great financial accountability, financial metrics, poor systems, awful lot of low-hanging fruit there, so we can improve our cost structure.

This is in my wheelhouse, hopefully. I spent a career helping organizations improve, and after doing it for so many years, I have certainly made my share of mistakes, but I certainly believe I understand and I think I can add some value there.

There are great people in the Pentagon, great people, and there is so much to work with. At any time when you are trying to improve operations and efficiency and do better, there are going to be changes. Those changes could be initially difficult, but with the right leadership, the right focus there are so many people at the Pentagon that want to do better at our Department of Defense and will work incredibly hard to do that. We will find the top people. We will give them autonomy, flexibility to do things, but of course we will hold them accountable.

As Chairman of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board under President Trump in the first administration, it was clear that we had some of these deficiencies. Five years later, I think things have only gotten worse. In our DOD companies, which we have bought over the years, certainly we were insiders, but I also have an outside perspective to bring. I think that is a good combination.

Not meaning to be too negative, but we really need to plug these shortages, focus on our priorities, get rid of legacy programs, be very disciplined, and while, at the same time, focusing on the economics. If we do that, given America's great innovative capabilities and entrepreneurship, we will defeat China. If we do not, our very national security is at risk.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I was wondering if I could introduce my family, if that is okay.

Chairman WICKER. Please do, yes. We would love to get to know them better.

Mr. FEINBERG. Thank you. Well, I am fortunate to have behind me my nephew, Jovan Diaz, who is currently a major in Special Forces, Green Beret, served multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. His brother, Eric Diaz, retired, former officer, served multiple tours in Iraq and Central America. My brother-in-law, Joe Swallow, former marine. My godson here today, Moses Franco, former marine NCO, and, of course, my brother-in-law, Fred Sanchez, who is not in the military but sort of like it. He spent nearly 27 years, New York Police.

My dad, who is too ill to be here today, is going to be 99. He served in the South Pacific. I believe he is watching. All my uncles, may they rest in peace, all served in World War II.

None of this would be possible without my wife of almost 39 years, Gisella, and my three daughters, Madeline, Gillian and Lisa—

Chairman WICKER. I am glad you finally got around to them.

Mr. FEINBERG. I'm sorry?

Chairman WICKER. Just a quip.

Mr. FEINBERG. My son-in-law, also who works at Cerberus today, buying companies that help America, which is a big part of our business.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Feinberg follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT BY STEPHEN A. FEINBERG

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Donald Trump's nominee to be the Deputy Secretary of Defense. I would like to explicitly thank President Trump for the confidence and trust he has placed in me.

I would also like to acknowledge my family. Thank you for your continued support.

My father, who will be 99 years old this year, served in the Pacific during World War II and my uncle in Normandy. They instilled in me a desire to serve and a devotion to the prosperity of the United States. While I will never come close to the contribution they and so many others in uniform have made to this great Nation, if confirmed, I pledge to do my best every day to serve in a manner worthy of their sacrifices.

Our Nation faces an urgent challenge from China and an increasingly complex array of threats as we witness deepening ties between China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. China's military continues to expand exponentially, and they become more emboldened and aggressive each day. Additionally, China effectively has a budget much larger than ours when you count the financial support their private sector provides. Their progress is disturbing, and their commitment is absolute. War is not inevitable, but strength is our path to peace. Simply, if we do not do more to counter the Chinese threat, our national security is at risk.

Our uniformed men and women, supported by Department of Defense (DOD) civilians at all levels, must be the most lethal fighting force in the world. This means being the best equipped, most modern, best trained, and best led military in the world, without question.

For too many years, the DOD has been plagued by mismanagement and inefficiency. From an outsider's perspective, overly bureaucratic processes, poor fiscal responsibility, and a lack of accountability has led to cost overruns, outdated infrastructure, and ineffective weapons platforms and capabilities. DOD's business failures continue to put our national security, and our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and guardians at risk.

For over 30 years, I have led organizational assessments, implemented complex reforms, and driven operational improvements with significant experience in the defense sector. If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, I will leverage my knowledge of strategy development, business operations, and risk management and work in collaboration with this Committee and Congress, across the executive branch, with our

industrial base, technology sectors, and private investment to help this Administration achieve its defense policy goals.

Under President Trump and Secretary Hegseth, the United States military must be stronger and more lethal than it has ever been. If confirmed, my priorities as Deputy Secretary will be: (1) meet mission requirements; (2) improve the DOD's financial and economic stewardship; (3) plug the increasing number of shortages and gaps in our military and operational capabilities that threaten our national security; and (4) cultivate the current and next generation of leaders.

My primary focus will be on enhancing the most critical mission capabilities needed to fight and win any war. We must adapt and scale our capabilities and address critical shortages in areas such as shipbuilding and munitions. We must invest smartly in advanced technologies and ensure our supply chains are more secure and resilient. We must take advantage of autonomy in all domains, and the modernization of our nuclear triad and other core capabilities is essential. There are unfortunately dozens of critical areas we must address.

This will require greater efficiency in managing the DOD's budget, streamlining the acquisition of key capabilities, implementing effective auditing and accountability measures, and improving other core business functions. Simply put, we must decrease costs, reduce waste, increase competition, and successfully execute the programs we initiate. If confirmed, I will review the full set of recommendations from the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) Reform Commission and I will hold leaders across DOD accountable for achieving financial statement audit outcomes. Such a clear commitment to financial integrity will maximize the impact of our resources while upholding the trust of the American people.

The strength of our military is built on the quality of our people. Our military will prioritize meritocracy and cultivate the leaders and both recruit and retain the talent we need—from both the public and private sectors—to implement the President's vision and Secretary's priorities.

I am committed to strengthening the mission capabilities, financial stewardship, and leadership development across DOD. Leveraging the full potential of our national strength, we can decisively defeat any threat to national security and enable a lasting peace.

I am eager to continue to work with this Committee to ensure that our military remains the strongest—and most lethal—in the world. I look forward to your questions.

Chairman WICKER. Well, thank you very, very much for that testimony. We now have some standard questions that are required of civilian nominees, so I ask you simply to answer with yes or no.

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

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

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

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

Chairman WICKER. 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?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Chairman WICKER. 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 requestor regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such records?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Chairman WICKER. I assume there will be no bad faith delay.

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?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Chairman WICKER. There may be, indeed, undoubtedly will be some questions for the record.

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

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

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

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much for those answers.

Now, you really have answered something that we are all interested in. We are not where we need to be, and we are facing two nuclear near-peer adversaries, and, for example, our shipbuilding, according to your testimony, is nowhere near where it should be.

There are people who say we do not have the industrial capacity, so what is the answer to that?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, Senator, it is a tough problem. Our supply chain is definitely weak. Our workforce needs to be improved. But a big piece of improving our supply chain is working more closely with our private sector. We have companies that can get us where our needs are, where our shortages are, and we need to work more closely with them. We need people inside of Government, that understand their issues, understand what drives their boards, what drives the pressure they get from shareholders. That kind of knowledge will enable us to try to find and work with more private sector companies who would be willing to get into this space.

We certainly have the manufacturing capability to meet the shortages in our supply chain. We have just got to encourage those companies to do it.

Chairman WICKER. Okay, and we probably will want you to enlarge on that on the record.

We are at 3 percent of GDP now. Is a percentage of GDP an accurate measure? I have been advocating for 5 percent. Why do people talk about a percentage of GDP?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, I think historically our military spending has been at a higher percentage of GDP, and of course, more funds would help us in a very difficult period. But my humble opinion, my job as Deputy, if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, would be work with whatever the funding the Senate and the House gives me, and I will do my best with that.

[The information referred to follows:]

Mr. FEINBERG. Increasing the capacity of the shipbuilding and ship repair industrial base is critical. We need to expand our combatant, submarine, and auxiliary fleets to meet our requirements in INDOPACOM and across the globe. If confirmed, I look forward to understanding the Navy's progress on its Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP), Submarine Industrial Base investments in production capacity, workforce expansion and retention, and supporting efforts to accelerate capacity and capability growth. I also look forward to addressing this issue wholistically and working with the Department of the Navy, other U.S. Government agencies, state and local governments, and industrial base partners on a whole of Government and Nation approach.

Chairman WICKER. Well, I think we took a real good step Thursday night, early into early hours Friday morning. You mentioned in terms of doing the sorts of things that I mentioned in my FORGED Act, in my paper, about restoring freedoms forge. You mentioned there is some low-hanging fruit. There is discussion about the 8 percent request that went out from the new Administration. I can tell you you are going to be very thoughtful about this, but discuss, if you will, the extent of this low-hanging fruit and to what extent do you think we can get started on that in this fiscal year.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, Senator, thank you. For example, in our program requirements, they are very rigid, gold-plated, expensive. We can get the job done with a simplification of many of those requirements. Then often, as the program starts, the requirements get changed, and then the industry has to then make changes, which really drive costs up. There are all types of things we can talk about regarding that.

I will say, on the cut, and obviously I have not been involved in any of the conversations, but I do believe that part of the plan should be, and will be, a lot of that money they are talking about saving will be reallocated inside DOD to mission priorities.

Chairman WICKER. Of course. Absolutely.

Well, let me briefly ask you. This Committee has been supportive of the Office of Strategic Capital and the idea of leveraging comparative advantages in private capital. Do you support the OSC and do you believe we need to significantly grow the Office of Strategic Capital?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, I would agree, but I think they also need to move faster. Right now it is a great concept. It can really help. But funding has to come quicker, with a faster, less bureaucratic process, and it is very key for us to address that or else that office will not be successful. But if we move at the speed of urgency, given our threats, that could be a great asset for us.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you for that commitment to the speed of urgency. Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Feinberg, for your testimony. You have already highlighted one of your major issues. That is building a budget and managing resources in which the threat environment is accelerating, and we still have current crises and commitments we must make. With this 8 percent cut, that is very deep. You go after the low-hanging fruit and then you have got a lot more work to do, I perceive.

Can you tell us how you are you are going to approach this problem?

Mr. FEINBERG. Thank you, Senator. I think that when you look at DOD today you do not have good systems, good understanding of our cost structure, you do not have the right financial metrics. So much is possible if you put in those types of capabilities into the Department.

I think that in most cases that I have seen, in businesses that there is the need to do better, we always are able to find more cuts than we would have expected, without hurting mission. Of course, all of these cuts can be reappropriated to the things we really need.

I do not think the idea is just to slash. The idea is to reallocate from things we do not need, which, for example, could be legacy systems that are not valuable in the fight anymore, to things we do need.

Senator REED. But reallocation, does that get you an 8 percent reduction, if you take X money and put X money someplace else?

Mr. FEINBERG. I'm sorry, Senator?

Senator REED. Reallocation. If you take X dollars from one account and put it in another account, how do you cut 8 percent of the DOD budget?

Mr. FEINBERG. My understanding of what I thought those cuts were is that we would have an ability to put it into the mission in ways that we cannot today. But if that is not available, if confirmed as Deputy Secretary, I think that there is so much there we can get at without cutting into the bone, and a lot of it is systems, capabilities, reporting, transparency. There is so much you can do when you do that.

Senator REED. Thank you. Over the weekend, the Secretary announced that 5,400 probationary employees would be dismissed, and it apparently was not done with any analysis. It was just preemptive, and you have run companies. Have you ever walked in and fired thousands of people without any analysis of the cost or benefits?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, I believe that every person is significant, and these cuts are always hard. But I believe that most of the cuts that we will see will be from people that want to retire, people who would like to resign early. You know, obviously there are over 900,000 civilians in DOD.

While you can never not take one person seriously, in these kinds of reorganizations there is always turnover, and without some turnover you cannot become an efficient organization.

Senator REED. Another topic is, I mentioned in my statement, Secretary Hegseth fired essentially all the TJAGs of the military services. One of his rationales is, quote, "removing blockades to what is going to happen." In usual terms, those blockades are called laws, so I believe Secretary Hegseth has just shown, again, his contempt for the law.

Do you commit to following the rule of law in your job?

Mr. FEINBERG. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator REED. Federal law states clearly that no DOD employee may interfere with the provisions of independent advice by TJAGs, military service leadership, and by JAG officers to commanders. Do you commit to respecting their independence?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator REED. Also instructing others to do so?

Mr. FEINBERG. Absolutely.

Senator REED. Relatedly, do you commit to the independence of DOD and other agencies' inspectors general?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Feinberg. Thank you. Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Reed. Senator Cotton.

Senator COTTON. Mr. Feinberg, it was already mentioned in your opening remarks and in your exchange with Senator Wicker the importance of revitalizing our defense industry. One important tool



the Department has is the Defense Production Act, going back decades. But unfortunately it has frequently struggled to effectively use the Defense Production Act. The previous Administration used it for non-critical needs like so-called green energy.

What are your thoughts on how we could reform the Defense Production Act and use it more effectively to jumpstart our defense industry?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, Senator, thank you. It is a great tool for us. I think we have to combine some of our top people at the Pentagon with private sector capability and look at the kind of things that we really need, with urgency, speed, of course, a lot of due diligence, but not crushing due diligence, which takes us 6 months, a year, a year and a half, which often happens in those kinds of programs. We have got to go faster. We have got to realize the threat. We have got to put the right people who can go faster.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. I appreciate that, and I agree, and especially when you get to the subcomponent level in industry, there are a lot of challenges with supply, and the Defense Production Act was passed decades ago out of recognition that when we are in a crisis, as I think we face now around the world, the defense industry simply has to come first when it comes to certain critical components or supply chain challenges.

You identified China as the most serious threat we face, certainly the most serious long-term threat we face. I completely agree with that. I am curious about your thoughts on what are the key acquisition programs underway right now, or that might soon be underway, that you think we would need in a conflict in the Western Pacific, obviously a conflict most likely to happen if Communist China decided to go for the jugular in Taiwan.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, clearly we need to develop autonomy, autonomy in significant numbers with a centralized command, effectively brain. We have to make the right decision on whether we need to build the next generation of aircraft, or we can rely on autonomy. Of course, we have got to improve our shipbuilding. China is very strong there. Our nuclear capabilities, we have to upgrade them, and we have to develop hypersonics. We cannot allow the Chinese to be faster than us, both in their weaponry and aircraft, and so many more, Senator.

Senator COTTON. Yes, thank you. I agree on all of those. One question or issue that you mentioned in there is whether we have a manned, sixth-generation fighter. I know that you have not been on the job yet, you have not gotten all the briefings that we have had on the Committee. Do you have any preliminary thoughts on the need for a manned fighter?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, that is a controversial issue, Senator, that are used on both sides. I want to get in there, if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, look at all the classified information, and ultimately that decision could be made by the Secretary or the President even, and see if I can add some value to it.

Senator COTTON. Sure, and as we discussed, I hope that we can move along promptly, and you can get the same information the Committee has. It is a decision that needs to be made soon, but it is not imminent, in a matter of days. I mean, there are several weeks left, I believe, before the decision needs to be made.

Any thoughts on munitions? Obviously, munitions are complicated these days, but they are still not a stealth bomber, they are not an aircraft carrier. We do need to increase basic rates of production on these. It is not reinventing the wheel. It is just making more of the same stuff. Any thoughts on how we can accelerate production rates in private industry?

Mr. FEINBERG. It is a tough problems. A lot of times in ammunition you need ammunition machines, effectively, to help build it, and those are in short supply.

You know, my hope is, if I am confirmed, that for each of these shortages, get in there, look at the specific facts, go over it in detail, understand the weaknesses, and come up with a detailed operating plan. In my humble opinion, often, in the past, maybe some of the senior civilian leadership in the Pentagon may be not as deep into the detail of these. Every operating entity has all sorts of detail you have got to get into.

I do not know yet, but I think there are a lot of companies we can attract to help us with this problem. It is not rocket science, munitions, and there is an ability to expand.

Senator COTTON. Okay. Thank you, and thanks to your family, your very large, extended family, and their record of service to our Nation and the military and in law enforcement, and also thanks to your father who is watching today, part of the Greatest Generation, along with your uncles. It is a great American story that reflects the story of so many other of our military families.

Mr. FEINBERG. Thank you for your service, Senator. I appreciate it.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Feinberg, congratulations on your nomination and welcome to all of your family. Thank you for your willingness to serve.

Mr. FEINBERG. Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Chairman Wicker and you, yourself, in your opening statement, made the point that we have been underinvesting in our defense in order to ensure the national security of this country. So I am a little confused about the strategy that, on the one hand, we have the Administration talking about cutting 8 percent across the board, primarily. There are about 17 areas exempt from those cuts, but those do not include any manned aircraft, so no fighter jets, no tankers, excludes military construction for the Indo-Pacific area.

On the one hand we are talking about cutting 8 percent for 5 years, and on the other hand we have upped the budget by \$150 billion, based on what the Senate voted to do on Thursday.

Help me understand what the strategy is here, and why, on the one hand—I can understand, as you pointed out and I think you are absolutely correct, that being strategic and thoughtful about how we become more efficient is really important. But across-the-board cuts do not do that. So how is this making us more secure, based on upping the budget on the one hand and cutting it on the other?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, obviously I do not have the detail on where these cuts are going to go. But there is always significant opportu-

nities of things we do not need when you really get into the detail. In my humble opinion, if I am able to get through confirmation, I think I can add value to that discussion and try to ensure that we make the right cuts. I do trust the Secretary's judgment on where he wants to go.

But there is a real opportunity to make the right cuts, and it has to be done thoughtfully, to your point. But I do not think the exact nature of these cuts have yet been determined, so I think there is an opportunity to apply them correctly.

Senator SHAHEEN. Perhaps the nature of the cuts have not been determined, but the layoffs have already started. One of the places where layoffs have been proposed is with our public shipyards. We have the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard that New Hampshire and Maine share. It is the oldest continuously operating shipyard in the country. It has the best on-time record in terms of maintenance. It maintains our nuclear attack submarines, and I guess I would raise real concerns about whether it makes sense to cut our workforce when those attack submarines are one of the real advantages we have over China.

Would you agree with me that we need to look long and hard before we start talking about cutting a workforce that maintains our nuclear attack submarines and gets them out on time and on budget?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, Senator. Again, I have not seen the detail of this, but if I am able to get in the job I will look at it super carefully and try to ensure that we make the right cuts that will not cut into mission.

Senator SHAHEEN. Senator Reed talked about his concerns about the firing of some of the top generals at the Pentagon, and I share that concern. I appreciate that the President can put in whoever he wants, but get rid of the years of experience and expertise so quickly seems to me to be short-sighted. But the question that I have for you is, if you are confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, would you support military officers providing the Committee their best military advice on issues, even if that advice differs from the Trump administration, or President Trump's views?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, as Deputy I believe I am an execution person, and I do not think it is my place to, make decisions on what our top military officers communicate. But I would support an honest, transparent conversation at all times, and I am confident in President Trump's strategies, and I think that the military will work well with him and support the Administration's goals.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, certainly and honest and transparent conversation is important to ensure we have the best military advice, which should be based on military capability and not based on politics.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator Fischer.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, Mr. Feinberg, both to you and to your family today, and thank you for putting yourself forward in these times to serve your country.

Historically, nuclear deterrence has been the highest priority mission of the Department of Defense. Our triad protects the

United States every single day from the only true existential threat that we face, and nuclear weapons guarantee our sovereignty. Mr. Feinberg, do you believe that nuclear deterrence should be the Department's highest priority mission?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. It is one of our very top priorities.

Senator FISCHER. Is it the highest priority, sir?

Mr. FEINBERG. It might be. If I am able to get in there and look at all the classified data and all our problems, I could certainly answer more directly. But there is nothing that could be more important than our nuclear modernization.

Senator FISCHER. Today, for the first time in history, we face two peer competitors when it comes to our nuclear posture that we have. We have a current force posture that was designed in 2010, when the threat environment looked different, before Russia and China modernized, before they expanded their own arsenals. So I look forward to being able to have conversations with you in the future on the importance of making that, continuing to make that the Department and our Nation's highest priority. Mr. Feinberg—

Mr. FEINBERG. Senator, I was thinking, one of the reasons why I hesitated on if it is the most important is clearly modernization is key. We also need hypersonics, you know, because if our enemy can carry nuclear capability on things faster than ours, it is a big problem. So I think it is a coordinated effort.

Senator FISCHER. It is all part of the problem that we have when we have those peer adversaries threatening this country every single day.

If confirmed, would you work with the Secretary to make sure that these modernization programs continue, and continue as best they can on schedule, and if opportunities present themselves to accelerate those programs would you be supportive of that, as well, and work with the Secretary on that?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Mr. Feinberg, given your experience in the private sector, if confirmed, how would you foster greater innovation inside the Department, and what can the Department do to make itself more attractive to private sector companies in developing that innovation?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well right now, with the way our programs work, it is very rigid, gold-plated, endless rules, and the big defense contractors have an advantage just based on how contracts work, bids and proposals. The process is cumbersome, and often they win simply because they are better at it. So if we can simplify that process, make it fairer, not be as inflexible, that will promote competition, so competing companies can worry more about capabilities than the process.

I also think that the cost of our very tough, rigid requirements sometimes is too gold-plated, which makes companies without as much capital unwilling to take the kind of risk. Some of that risk is unnecessary in development.

So a lot we can do by getting into the program detail, line by line.

Senator FISCHER. Good.

Mr. FEINBERG. My view is that the Deputy has to go program by program, line by line, not hand it off to somebody else.

Senator FISCHER. Okay. Good. Mr. Feinberg, there are currently efforts underway to force the Department of Defense to vacate critical bands of spectrum, including the lower 3 band and the 7–8 gigahertz band. This would mean that the Department would not be allowed to operate radar systems or satellite systems that allow our warfighters to detect, to discriminate, track, and shoot incoming missiles and enemy targets. I adamantly believe that forcing national security systems to vacate these bands would be detrimental to national security. It would degrade our missile defense capabilities when we should be aggressively pursuing an Iron Dome for America. That would be off the table if these were vacated.

However, I also understand that sharing these bands with commercial entities may be possible. This would potentially allow DOD systems to operate and coexist with commercial systems in the same exact bands without forcing us to lose these capabilities.

Do you believe the Department of Defense must have meaningful co-leadership role in interagency determinations about the future of Federal spectrum? Should DOD be at the table to be involved in those decisions?

Mr. FEINBERG. I totally agree. We need spectrum to defend our country. We also need commercial use of it to develop the technology to be able to defend our country. The best solution is sharing, but we have to get it right, make sure sharing can be done without risk. That needs to get tested, and until that is clear that it can be done without risk, we must protect DOD's spectrum position.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. It must be clear that it can be done without risk. Correct?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, Senator.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Fischer. Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Feinberg, welcome to you and your family.

I ask the following two initial questions of all nominees before any of my committees, to address the fitness to serve.

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

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

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

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

Senator HIRONO. Now, the DOD will need to cut some 8 percent off its budget, and again, we wonder how that happens when, at the same time, other parts of the budget is being increased. But a lot of these cuts, I think, will come from the workforce, which I think we acknowledge is a critical part of our readiness.

So here we see that some 5,400 people have already been, or will soon be let go from DOD, and these are people who are on probationary status. These are not people getting ready to retire. In fact, across the many departments, people on probation are being let go,

1,000 in DOJ [Department of Justice], 250 in SBA [Small Business Administration]. So these are cuts that are happening across the board, not based on any analysis of impact. There are some 55,000 people on probation within the DOD, and I think the expectation is that many of them will be also let go. There are some 350 people on probationary status at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, and so these are critical people in our shipyards, as also mentioned by my colleague, Senator Shaheen.

Since all these cuts are being made without any kind of analysis, don't you have a concern that these cuts will have an impact on readiness?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, most of the substantial cuts that they are talking about are yet to happen.

Senator HIRONO. As I mentioned, though, they are happening to those in the probationary status. These are people who just got hired, who are just being trained to serve.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. I have spent a career in restricting companies and dealing with these workforce issues. If I can get through confirmation I do think I can add some real value working with the Secretary, of course, in the process to do that properly, fairly, with the right people.

Every organization goes through some turnover when you have really needs to improve. Initially it is difficult, but the top people will step up, and it can be ultimately improving the culture.

Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, as I mentioned, these are not based on any kind of analysis that you would normally do in the civilian sector, which you are very familiar with. I hardly think that in your business you would just start getting rid of people across the board, especially new hires who presumably went through the process of vetting.

Now regarding the concerns about the purging of senior military officers, I too have the concern. Let me just ask you a series of questions that I expect either a yes or no answer.

Do you believe it is important that senior military officers be able to provide their best military advice, regardless of politics and without fear of reprisal?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator HIRONO. Do you believe that it is important that uniformed JAG officers feel free to provide their best legal advice on the fair administration of military justice and compliance with the law of armed conflict?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator HIRONO. Do you believe in the independence of the inspectors general to root out fraud, waste, and abuse?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator HIRONO. We are concerned about similar cuts to USAID [United States Agency for International Development], and we are talking about thousands of people who were providing services to not just very important to our own country, but obviously to our allies. Mr. Feinberg, do you agree that gutting USAID funding and personnel endangers our interests around the globe, especially in the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not know. I do not have all the facts and knowledge of that USAID and what the considerations were in

making those decisions. But I do trust the Secretary and the President's judgment on that.

Senator HIRONO. Wouldn't you say that if you were a country, including island nations, who receive USAID funds, this kind of cut would be shocking and would have negative impacts on their economy and their people?

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much, Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. I would say the answer has to be yes. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator Rounds.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Feinberg, first of all, thank you for the opportunity to visit beforehand in my office. I enjoyed that discussion. I want to also thank your family for their service to our country and also thank you for taking the time to leave the private sector and to come in and to offer your expertise.

The time that you spent at Cerberus Capital and the fact that you have looked at a number of different defense-related businesses in the past really does help with regard to how we make changes at the Pentagon level.

I want to start just by clarifying one thing. When we talk about an 8 percent cut, we are talking about prioritizing, which is the bottom 8 percent that they think, or that they want leaders within the Pentagon to identify as perhaps being reapportionable to other more important portions. Is that your understanding as well, sir?

Mr. FEINBERG. It is.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. Your background has also given you some insight, even before getting classified briefings, with regard to spectrum, and I want to spend some time on that once again. I think this is one of the most important issues that faces the Department of Defense right now, and that is spectrum sharing, which you are familiar with because actually one of the companies which you had invested in actually looked at spectrum sharing and the need for that. So that is the reason why I want to go through this a little bit.

Senator Fischer did an excellent job of laying out the real serious threat to our national security should we lose the ability to use radar, which is located in the 3.1 to 3.45 gigahertz of the spectrum. I do not want to get real deep technically, but basically that is the most advanced radars we have. You indicated hypersonics was an important part of the discussion right now. Those weapon systems, you are aware that we detect them using this portion of the spectrum. Are you familiar with that, sir?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, Senator.

Senator ROUNDS. If the Department of Defense was forced to either give it up, or because of interference have a less likely chance of identifying that, it would make those systems less reliable. Would you agree with that, sir?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, sir.

Senator ROUNDS. Right now, in Hawaii, it is defended by destroyers that carry this portion of it that provides the radar defenses. The Secretary of the Navy, or the Navy has indicated, in multiple testimonies before this Committee, that there is a cost should they have to either make significant changes or lose that part of the

spectrum or replace it elsewhere. At \$250 billion for the Navy alone to replace it over a period of perhaps 20 years. Are you familiar with that, sir?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, I am.

Senator ROUNDS. Okay. Right now, we need to find a solution that allows for further development of spectrum by our commercial sectors, but at the same time, we cannot lose or force the Department of Defense to give this portion up, or our Nation is at risk. Would you agree with that, sir?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do agree.

Senator ROUNDS. Today, if we look at the President's new idea, and I fully support him in this. President Trump has issued what I believe is a game-changing executive order (EO), directing the Department of Defense to develop and build an Iron Dome missile defense shield for America. I think some people called it the "golden dome." This dome for America would not be possible if the Department of Defense has to vacate some or all of the lower 3 band and other crucial portions of the spectrum.

In fact, as Senator Fischer noted last week, Iron Dome for America will need even more radars than we currently have, and those systems cannot function properly if there is too much noise, which includes development of 5G by the commercial sectors, that noise on the spectrum, where they are operating.

If confirmed, will you protect the Department of Defense's spectrum so that the President's Iron Dome for America can be built and function optimally?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir. Look, your background, you are a finance guy. You invested in a company that looks at spectrum sharing. Can you share a little bit of the expertise that you picked up with regard to spectrum sharing and the availability of it, if we are allowed the time to actually get it developed and prove it to be functional?

Chairman WICKER. About 30 seconds worth of that, sir.

Mr. FEINBERG. Okay, there are two ways. One is managed spectrum share, which we have to improve significantly to ensure it can be done safely and still protect our country. But I think we can do that over time. It has to be tested.

The other is simultaneous share, and that is what DOD really would love, and that is early in its stage, it has to be tested, but it does provide great promise in terms of solving these problems. We have got to really test it and make it sure it works.

Senator ROUNDS. But it is a path forward, but it has to be tested.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

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

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Rounds. Senator Ernst.

Senator ERNST. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Feinberg, for being here today. I want to thank your family, as well, for their service.

Let's start with our defense budget auditability, okay. We spoke about this in my office. I have been long committed to cutting unnecessary spending in Washington, DC, and the Pentagon is no exception to this. The DOD, which controls the largest discretionary budget in the Federal Government has never passed a full financial



audit. This failure continues to erode our public trust, and it prevents the efficient use of taxpayer dollars for critical defense priorities.

Mr. Feinberg, what specific measures will you implement to ensure the DOD finally passes an audit, as our law requires?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. It is super important. We have got to have financial accountability. I guess I was told we have 480 systems at DOD. I am not sure of the exact number, but obviously we have got to consolidate systems. We have got to bring in the right help to work closely with the Pentagon to be able to clarify and make simpler our financial process.

If confirmed, I can get in there and look at the specific details. We have done this, historically, in so many companies. Generally when a company has a problem, they often have financial issues.

I cannot say exactly, but it is all achievable. Financial audits are very achievable. We will get it done.

Senator ERNST. Yes, and that is why I am trusting that your background and expertise can make this possible. We know that there are many private organizations and businesses that are of a similar scale to the Pentagon, maybe not quite as large. But they successfully undergo rigorous financial audits all the time. This is possible. But I do believe you are heading on the right thing when you talk about structural changes, the siloing of information within the Department. That needs to change for auditability.

Are there also cultural changes that would be necessary at the Pentagon to make sure that there is financial accountability?

Mr. FEINBERG. For sure, it has to be a priority. We have to recognize the importance of it. Because not only it is about, as you said, getting an audit done. It is about being able to understand our finances, understand our cost structure. I do not believe, in the Department of Defense, any of our leaders fully understand our cost structure, and at one hit of a button to say, like most of our CEOs say this is what this costs, this is what that is, this is where we are spending money. That specificity is simple, but it is key.

It has to be a priority. Not that easy to do quickly, to change all the different systems in a way that does not make things worse. It has to be done carefully. We need a great controller at DOD, one that has great private sector experience. But we also need a great deputy for him that understands the FAR [Federal Acquisition Regulation] and all the issues that relate to Government.

Senator ERNST. Yes, thank you. Another issue, very quickly, is making sure that we are streamlining the acquisition process. Procurement is a mess at the DOD, and anyone familiar with the Pentagon understands that the current acquisition process is very sluggish. It is burdened by a lot of bureaucracy, and obviously everyone is prone to cost overruns.

Mr. Feinberg, what steps will you take to accelerate the transition of AI [artificial intelligence] and other emerging technologies from research and development to actual operational deployment?

Mr. FEINBERG. AI is an overused word in this sense. Most of it is just high-end data analytics. Of course, there is some use of AI, but it is developing.

The key, I think, to success, is having the operators partner with the technologists, and they really have to work together. Often the

technologists are, you know, we know it all, and other times the operators are, hey, don't bother me with this, I'm busy.

Both sides have to accept that partnership. Technologists have to accept the operators' knowledge is essential in developing better data analytics and AI, and the technologists have to work closely, and the operators have to understand the value and the benefit. Part is culture. Every company that is successful at that integration has that partnership.

Senator ERNST. Very good. Thank you so much, Mr. Feinberg.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you. Thank you very much, Senator Ernst. Senator Kaine has slipped in under the wire.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Congratulations to the nominee. I am still huffing and puffing from racing from another meeting. But I really appreciated the meeting that we had in my office. I think you have sort of a nontraditional skill set to bring to this nomination, but for reasons I may get into with my questions and that we discussed in the office, I think some nontraditional skills are sort of necessary right now in some of the matters you discussed in your opening statement.

Mr. FEINBERG. Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Before I ask you a question I just want to tell my colleagues, I had a whirlwind weekend. We were on the floor until 5 a.m. Friday on the reconciliation bill, and then I flew to Finland. I just spent the weekend with the Virginia Army Guard and the Karelia Brigade, which is one of the three brigades of the Finnish Army, doing a joint training exercise in snow-covered birch forests in southern Finland. It was a fascinating 48 hours on the ground with a great NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] ally.

I met with the President, the Foreign Minister, the Department of Defense Secretary of the shipbuilding industry. Finland is a great ally and a great friend, and it is important to hear what your friends say.

I came back with some thoughts. We have got to remember 1938, a desire on behalf of the Prime Minister of England to declare peace in our time. He was able to achieve it and declare peace in our time, but it was a disaster because the peace of appeasing a bully was a catastrophe.

In 1975, in Helsinki, 50 years ago this summer, we entered into the Helsinki Accords to create stability in Europe, and the then-Soviet Union pledged to respect the sovereign integrity of every other nation. In fact, all the signators to the accords did. That is worthy of celebration after 50 years, and revitalizing.

In 1995, we created the OSCE [Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe] coming out of the Helsinki Accords, to essentially do the same thing.

Five years ago this week, President Trump negotiated a deal with the Taliban, leaving the government of Afghanistan out of the deal, and we were able to declare peace in our time. But the decision to omit Afghan participation in that peace deal turned into a catastrophe, and the inspector general that did the after-assessment, after August 2021, indicated that cutting the Afghans out led to such a feeling of abandonment that that was one of the critical factors in that going wrong.

Even if you forget all the history, just remember what your parents told you when you were going to school, the first time you complained about a bully. They said, "You have got to stand up to a bully, or a bully will keep bullying you, and others."

Yesterday, in the meetings in Helsinki, it was the third anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and a resolution as offered at the UN [United Nations] General Assembly containing this phrase: "The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has persisted for 3 years." That phrase, saying that it was an invasion by the Russian Federation, led the United States of America to vote no. The resolution failed. The United States voted no, along with Russia, Nicaragua, North Korea.

It was sobering to be in Helsinki with this new NATO ally, who joined NATO and is exercising with Virginia troops, and have the United States unwilling—unwilling—to vote for something because it placed the blame for the invasion on the Russian Federation. We have a President who will not clearly say it. We have a Secretary of Defense who will not clearly say it. We have too many people who will not speak the truth. This was a Russian invasion of Ukraine. At the highest levels of our Government right now we have folks who will not speak the truth, and they will stand with Russia and Nicaragua and North Korea rather than standing with allies.

It is important that we not let these things just pass by unremarked upon. This is the first Armed Services hearing we have had since the third anniversary, and I just felt like I wanted to put it on the record. Would you agree with me, Mr. Feinberg? You talked about the competition with China and what it is going to take for us to succeed. Would you agree with me that in that competition, a robust network of allies is one of the great assets that the United States has, and we should work to maintain it?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. I think our allies are very important, but our relationships with them need to be fair to America and in our interests.

Senator KAINE. I would never suggest otherwise.

Mr. FEINBERG. Of course, Senator. Also, as Deputy, execution would be my job, and making diplomatic policy and relationship decisions would be more of a job of the Secretary and, of course, the President.

Senator KAINE. I really will want your help, and we talked at length about shipbuilding. We are putting more money in, year after year, and then let's put more money in is not getting us the result that we need. I think you have a skill set, again, that is a little bit nontraditional, but we are not going to be able to solve our production woes just by this Committee voting for greater appropriations. If we do not have some changemakers, we are not going to get to where we need to get, and I look forward to continuing that discussion.

With that, Mr. President, I yield. I would like to ask that the U.N. General Assembly resolution that I referred to, that the U.S. voted against and caused it to fail, I would like to ask that it be entered into the record.

Chairman WICKER. Reserving the right to object, I was told the resolution was adopted by the General Assembly.

Senator KAINE. There was a resolution adopted. The one that I read that put the onus on Russia was defeated. One that removed it, the Security Council did approve it, although the U.S. abstained.

Chairman WICKER. If it is all right, let's put both of them in the record, for clarity.

Senator KAINE. No worries.

[The information referred to follows:]

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**General Assembly**

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Eleventh emergency special session

Agenda item 5

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent  
Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed  
to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: \* draft resolution

### **Advancing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine**

*The General Assembly,*

*Reaffirming* the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and recalling its resolutions adopted at its eleventh emergency special session, its resolution 68/262 of 27 March 2014 and its resolution 78/316 of 11 July 2024,

*Noting with concern* that the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has persisted for three years and continues to have devastating and long-lasting consequences not only for Ukraine, but also for other regions and global stability,

*Reiterating* that the early achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace would constitute a significant contribution to strengthening international peace and security,

*Recalling* the obligation of all States under Article 2 of the Charter to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations, and to settle their international disputes by peaceful means,

\* Any changes to the list of sponsors will be reflected in the official record of the meeting.



*Reaffirming its commitment* to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, extending to its territorial waters,

*Reaffirming* that no territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be recognized as legal,

*Deploing* the dire human rights and humanitarian consequences of the aggression, and condemning all attacks against civilians and civilian objects, including those that are critical energy infrastructure,

*Deploing also* the particular impact that the aggression has on women and children, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and other civilians who have specific needs, including persons with disabilities and older persons,

*Expressing its deep concern* at the war's profound and long-lasting effects on the mental health of people, in particular children, amplifying the trauma and its consequences for future generations,

*Noting with deep concern* the ongoing adverse impact of the war on global food security, energy, the global economy, nuclear security and safety and the environment,

*Recalling* the order of provisional measures of the International Court of Justice of 16 March 2022,<sup>1</sup>

*Stressing* that any involvement of troops of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea fighting alongside forces of the Russian Federation raises serious concerns regarding further escalation of this conflict,

1. *Calls for* a de-escalation, an early cessation of hostilities and a peaceful resolution of the war against Ukraine, marked by enormous destruction and human suffering, including among the civilian population, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and international law;

2. *Reiterates* the urgent need to end the war this year, and to redouble diplomatic efforts to reduce the risks of further escalation and achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, consistent with the Charter, including its principles of sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States, as underscored in its resolution ES-11/6 of 23 February 2023, and notes the multilateral processes to this end;

3. *Takes note* of the efforts by various Member States in mitigating the effects of the war and in presenting their visions for a comprehensive and lasting settlement through inclusive diplomacy, dialogue and political means based on the Charter and international law;

4. *Recalls* the need for full implementation of its relevant resolutions adopted in response to the aggression against Ukraine, in particular its demand that the Russian Federation immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, and its demand for an immediate cessation of the hostilities by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, in particular of any attacks against civilians and civilian objects;

5. *Emphasizes* the need to ensure accountability for the most serious crimes under international law committed on the territory of Ukraine through appropriate,

<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-seventh Session, Supplement No. 4 (A/77/4)*, paras. 189–197.

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fair and independent investigations and prosecutions at the national or international level, and ensure justice for all victims and the prevention of future crimes;

6. *Reiterates its call for* the complete exchange of prisoners of war, the release of all unlawfully detained persons and the return of all internees and of civilians forcibly transferred and deported, including children;

7. *Calls upon* the parties to the armed conflict to fully comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians, especially women and children, and persons hors de combat, as well as civilian objects, and to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access to those in need;

8. *Reiterates its call for* the immediate cessation of attacks against critical energy infrastructure, which increase the risk of a nuclear accident or incident;

9. *Urges* all Member States to cooperate in the spirit of solidarity to address the global impacts of the war on food security, energy, finance, nuclear security and safety and the environment, underscores that arrangements for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine should take into account these factors, and calls upon Member States to support the Secretary-General in his efforts to address these impacts;

10. *Decides* to adjourn the eleventh emergency special session of the General Assembly temporarily and to authorize the President of the General Assembly to resume its meetings upon request from Member States.

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United Nations

A/ES-11/L.11



## General Assembly

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## Eleventh emergency special session

Agenda item 5

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent  
Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed  
to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

## United States of America:\* draft resolution

## The path to peace

*The General Assembly,*

*Mourning* the tragic loss of life throughout the Russian Federation-Ukraine  
conflict,

*Reiterating* that the principal purpose of the United Nations, as expressed in the  
Charter of the United Nations, is to maintain international peace and security and to  
peacefully settle disputes,

*Implores* a swift end to the conflict and further urges a lasting peace between  
Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

\* Any changes to the list of sponsors will be reflected in the official record of the meeting.

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Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. Take a deep breath.  
Perhaps Senator Scott would like to pass. Senator Mullin.

Senator MULLIN. Now that is a gentleman there. Thank you, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Who are you speaking of? I am just kidding.

Senator MULLIN. Both. I want to take some time here, because  
it was not where I was planning to go, but I just cannot allow my  
colleagues on the other side to just spew 100 percent mistruths  
constantly, and then play into the fear of the American people.

I am just going to start, first of all, with national security issues.  
National security issue one is our national debt, and our national

debt is now costing us more to just pay interest than we spend on our military. That is a huge national security risk.

So at what point do we start making cuts? People want to start talking about cutting 5,400 jobs out of the DOD as a whole when they have 950,000 employees, and we are talking about less than 0.5 percent of the workforce, where do we start cutting? We are spending trillions of dollars with agencies that are not unfunded, and you are going to tell me we do not have the ability to cut some employees when underneath the Biden administration it was bloated, and there is not room to cut? When a company is going underwater you do have to take a look at the workforce. I do not want to suggest that our country is going underwater, but if we continue this path, we will.

I commend President Trump and those that he has put in place to actually make hard cuts. Making cuts are difficult. It is tough. But when are we supposed to start if we do not start now? The previous Administration was not willing to do that.

Then, as the Senator that just asked questions, wanted to bring up the Afghanistan withdrawal? Brother, that is very close to me. That hits home, and you are going to lay the withdrawal on President Trump and say it was his fault? The disastrous withdrawal came 100 percent from the Biden administration, and American lives were left behind, and they are still dying because of it. Americans' lives were lost during the withdrawal, and you are going to sit there with a straight face and try to say that it was President Trump's fault, when the Biden administration, and all of know this because we were briefed on this, that the Biden administration threw out the entire withdrawal plan that the Trump administration had, and decided to go their own way, and man, wasn't that great.

Then we are going to start talking about President Trump not calling a bully out, like Putin? Did we forget what happened in 2017, when Trump 100 percent told Russia to stay out of Syria, not to be involved, especially with the bombing of Assad's own people? When they did, President Trump, within 30 minutes, took out the airfield that they operated out of, destroyed it, and then took back the airspace, and we had the airspace in Syria all the way up until Biden took office, and we gave it back to Putin.

Or stand up to a bully, do we want to go back to Israel and Hamas, and discuss the way the Biden administration handled that, and the way they refused to call Hamas a terrorist organization, and the Houthis a terrorist organization, and Iran a terrorist organization? You are going to sit there with a straight face and actually say that about President Trump. Are you joking me?

Are we serious saying that President Trump is not willing to stand up to a bully when underneath his Administration was the only time that Russia did not advance into Ukraine, because they did it underneath Obama when they took Crimea, and they did it underneath Biden because they did not respect him because of the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, and every expert will tell you that.

So where is it that we are coming up with this, other than just plain fear? All I want to do is just stroke fear into the American people and try to divide something between us and the President.



Because the President is bringing back hostages. He also brought back a hostage that Biden left behind, and he did not give up one thing to Russia, including a guy that was highly, highly considered a threat to the world. What was his name, anybody? What was his nickname? No, not Soleimani. Dr. Death, that we decided to trade for. I am sure you guys thought that was a good trade.

Guys, give me a break. We are trying to advance America's agenda and do what is best for this country, and the American people agree with the direction we are going.

So, sir, sorry about going on a rant here, because I actually did want to get into your business and the direction that you can take our defense industry. But that could not go without answers.

You and I have already had a conversation, and we will continue our conversation, and I look forward to working with you. With that, I yield back.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Mullin. Senator Warren.

Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, you have been nominated to be Secretary of Defense in charge of DOD's \$850 billion budget. Your main qualification is that you have built one of the world's largest private equity companies. You have spent your entire career honing the private equity tools that used to hollow out our businesses, from department stores to veterinary practices, and presumably those are the skills that you would bring to the Department of Defense.

I just want to look at how that has worked. Let's start with how you treat people. In Massachusetts, in 2010, your private equity firm bought six nonprofit hospitals, turned them into for-profit hospitals, called Steward. Ten years later, you cashed out, having made a profit a little shy of a billion dollars, and leaving behind a hospital system that was staggered under a load of debt, and 4 years later, collapsed into bankruptcy.

Now, Mr. Feinberg, when we met in my office you told me that your private equity outfit made an average 23 percent annual return each year that you owned your hospitals. If Steward nurses had gotten the same 23 percent salary increases that your investors effectively got every year, do you know how much they would be paid at the time you sold off your hospitals?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, I do know that in 2010, the hospitals were going under, and we were—

Senator WARREN. I am sorry, Mr. Feinberg, we have very limited time here and I actually want to spend it on your qualifications to do this job, and it is about how you treat people. The average nurse in the Steward hospitals at the time you bought them made \$85,120. At a 23 percent annual raise, how much money would they be making right now?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am not going to do the math, but—

Senator WARREN. Okay. I will do the math for you.

Mr. FEINBERG.—but what I could tell you—

Senator WARREN. Eight hundred twenty-nine thousand, eight hundred twenty-eight dollars. Now, of course, the nurses did not do that well. During that same period of time, Carney Hospital, one of the hospitals you bought in Massachusetts, raised nurses' salaries about 1.5 percent a year, and that was the best increase across the Steward hospitals that you were running.

Mr. FEINBERG. That is incorrect.

Senator WARREN. In other words, you seem to think that when it is time to reorganize a business, that equity should get about 15 times as much return on their investment as the people who actually do the work.

Let's take a look at the second issue, and that is maintaining critical functions.

Mr. FEINBERG. Senator, would you like me to respond to Steward—

Senator WARREN. We need to make progress at the Department of Defense—

Mr. FEINBERG.—because a lot of inaccurate statements.

Senator WARREN. But we also—

Chairman WICKER. Mr. Feinberg, she is entitled to make a speech.

Mr. FEINBERG. I apologize.

Chairman WICKER. She is entitled to go on and on.

Senator WARREN. Now let's go back to Steward hospitals. Did you cut fat or did you cut vital functions?

Now, Mr. Feinberg, the town of Quincy used to have a full medical center, with primary and specialty care, a surgery department, an urgent care department, and a VA clinic. That was its basic function. After your private equity company finished with it, what was left?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, when we exited the investment in 2020, the company was doing well.

Senator WARREN. I am asking, what was left of the Quincy hospital?

Chairman WICKER. Now, Senator, he is trying to answer a question.

Senator WARREN. That is what I am asking.

Chairman WICKER. You finally stopped for a breath. Do you intend to let him at least have maybe 20, 30 seconds to answer a question?

Senator WARREN. Can I have my time back?

Chairman WICKER. Yes. I said you are entitled to make a speech. But you stopped with a question mark, and he started to try to answer the question.

Senator WARREN. All right. What is the answer to the question? What was left of the Quincy hospital? That was my question.

Mr. FEINBERG. Lots happened after we exited, and there has been mismanagement.

Senator WARREN. My question, what was left when you exited?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am not certain that that changed.

Senator WARREN. It was an emergency room and nothing more.

Mr. FEINBERG. But, but, we took those hospitals from collapse, in 2010, and we were going to shut it down, as the 10th-largest employer of Massachusetts. We turned them around, fixed them, grew them, had a tremendous amount of success, worked closely with the Governor, and the problems at Steward happened after we exited the investment.

Senator WARREN. I am asking about questions as you exited and during the period of time you ran it.

Now, of course, a hospital is supposed to provide good quality care, and that takes qualified nurses and other staffers. Mr. Feinberg, for the hospitals that did not close down, during the time you ran it, do you know how many unsafe staffing complaints were filed?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do know the vast majority of problems happened after we left, and by the way, our nurses were among the highest paid in the country.

Senator WARREN. Is that a no, that you do not know how much—

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not know.

Senator WARREN.—how many unsafe staffing complaints were filed? Well, let me tell you. There were over 1,000 filed. That is five times the normal rate in Massachusetts.

Mr. FEINBERG. What year was that?

Senator WARREN. This is the years that you were in control. So the two hospitals—

Chairman WICKER. Senator Warren, perhaps you would like to take another round.

Senator WARREN. No. I would like to just finish. I just have a quote.

Chairman WICKER. Your time has expired, Senator. Your time has expired.

Senator WARREN. I spent a great deal of that time listening to the Chairman tell me how I have to conduct my questions.

Chairman WICKER. Your time has expired. The Senator's time has expired.

Senator WARREN. No. Could I just close—

Chairman WICKER. Senator Sullivan.

Senator WARREN.—could I just close, Mr. Chairman? I would just like to say why I care about this issue.

Senator SULLIVAN. I have a—

Chairman WICKER. Your time has expired. She can have another round.

Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, thank you for your service, and I appreciated our meetings over the last several months.

Let me just begin. The Ranking Member mentioned the apolitical military. Secretary Hegseth, in his confirmation hearing, said that the professional uniformed military, quote, "must remain patriotically apolitical and stridently constitutional." That is the Secretary's statement. I agree with that. Do you agree with that?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. This is a unique and important attribute of our U.S. military that makes our country very strong and our military very strong. Do you agree with that, as well?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask another question that I raised in Secretary Hegseth's hearing. He got the question, I asked him, right, about when Billy Mitchell, the father of the U.S. Air Force, testified in front of this Committee in the mid-1930's, calling a Alaska the most strategic place in the world. Do you agree with that?

Mr. FEINBERG. I agree it is one of the most strategic places in the world.

Senator SULLIVAN. All right. Well, maybe I will not support your nomination. I am kidding. It is not Greenland, though. Let's make that—

In all seriousness, we have a lot going on in Alaska. We have had Russian, Chinese, Asia's incursions, naval incursions. It is a real active place. The Lower 48 media does not cover it. We had two incursions just last week by Russian air bombers.

Will you commit to come to Alaska with me, if confirmed, to see our great military up there and just how strategic it is?

Mr. FEINBERG. I will.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask on shipbuilding. We are in a crisis. The Biden administration focused more on climate change than shipbuilding. The congressional Research Service, which is our research service here in the Congress, their experts said we are in the worst crisis in shipbuilding in over 40 years. The Chinese are building a giant navy. It is already bigger than ours. By 2030, I think it is going to be over 420 ships. It will be about 120, 130 times bigger, in terms of ships, 120, 130 ships bigger than our Navy.

We could spend two hearings on shipbuilding. But can you give me a sense. You have done this kind of thing, where you have turned around a real big problem in the private sector. This is a huge private sector and government challenge. Give me a couple of big ideas. My team and I have put together a big shipbuilding plan. So has the Chairman. This is a bipartisan issue, by the way. Senator Kelly is very focused on this. Our National Security Advisor now, Mike Waltz, is very focused on this. There are a lot of good ideas there. But give me a couple of key elements of how we turn this around.

I mentioned this to President Trump. Republicans actually have a history of this. Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet. President Reagan's 600-ship Navy. This should be a priority, and I think it is, of the President, the Secretary of the Navy. But we are going to need your experience to do this. What are some big ideas you have on this?

Mr. FEINBERG. You know, talent is everything, people. HR [human resources] is hard, and trying to get the right people. Even the best leaders will have failures. But I think we need to work very closely with the PPO and the administration and find really strong manufacturing, private leaders who understand process workforce, who have done this before, and really drive talent into the struggling shipyards. They could partner with a lot of our great people in the Pentagon and DOD, to help improve.

This is an operational turnaround. It is about people. It is about talent. There are plenty of leaders in America that have done this. We have just got to get them on the home team, there, and all in.

Senator SULLIVAN. Well, I think this Committee wants to work with you on this. It is really important issue. It is a bipartisan issue. It is a critical issue.

Let me ask one final question, Mr. Feinberg. The President has declared a national energy emergency. Unfortunately, the last Administration did not recognize the strategic assets of our country, especially my State. The Biden administration issued 70 executive orders to shut down Alaska. President Trump, on day one, issued

this executive order on unleashing Alaska's extraordinary resource potential. I talked to Secretary Hegseth about this over the weekend.

Can you commit to me—the Secretary of Defense is mentioned in this EO, and many others—to work with me

and this Committee on unleashing our critical mineral potential, natural gas potential, military bases, buying natural gas in Alaska. This is a key component of the President's strategy. It is going to make our country stronger, and it is far cry from what we just experienced under the Biden administration——

Chairman WICKER. Will you make that——

Senator SULLIVAN.—to shut down critical minerals.

Chairman WICKER. Will you make that commitment, Mr. Feinberg?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, I will.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Senator Blumenthal.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your willingness to serve, Mr. Feinberg, and welcome to the Committee.

Mr. FEINBERG. Thank you.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. As you know, 5,000 probationary employees have been fired. The plan apparently is to cut another 75,000 Department of Defense civilian employees. You would agree with me that civilian employees often perform a very critical role for the Department of Defense.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, I do.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Many of these layoffs, in fact, will undercut our national security. I have just come from a hearing of the Veterans Affairs Committee, a joint House/Senate. I am the Ranking Member on the Veterans Affairs Committee. Many of them are deeply concerned about their jobs in the VA and the Department of Defense.

The position you have been nominated to fill oversees the entirety of the workforce and the civilian workforce at the DOD. My question is really simple. What do you have to say to the veterans at the Department of Defense whom Elon Musk is firing?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, we certainly have a cost problem, and addressing cost problems are difficult. Sometimes we have to make change to help an organization do better in the future. It has to be done thoughtfully. So I would say to those veterans, we have got to make our Department of Defense stronger. The majority of cuts are coming. If I am able to get confirmed——

Senator BLUMENTHAL. What I hear you saying, sir, essentially we do not need you. You are expendable. Your life of service is meaningless, and the job you are doing now is going to be road kill.

Mr. FEINBERG. Sir, I——

Senator BLUMENTHAL. That is the message that is being sent to these veterans. So I would simply urge you to take into account that these Department of Defense civilian employees were once wearing a uniform.

Mr. FEINBERG. I totally understand, and it is something that has to be done the right way. All of these people are super important. But every organization has turnover, has to make change, and if

you do not make change you can end up in a much worse position. So we cannot endlessly expand the force. We have to sometimes make change.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. You know, from your—and I apologize for——

Mr. FEINBERG. I apologize.

Senator BLUMENTHAL.—interrupting, but as you know, my time is limited.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. You know, from all of your experience in the private sector that you just cannot take a meat ax. You have to use a scalpel in determining who is necessary and not. Eliminating waste does not mean you lay waste to the Department of Defense.

Let me move on to another topic, if I may. The United States military is the best-trained and most effective fighting force the world has ever seen. We depend on our Armed Forces to protect us from hostile foreign powers. But unlike in countries where autocratic leaders deploy their military against their own people, the United States military is not a weapon to be used against Americans. Domestic deployment of Federal Armed Forces is legally authorized under very narrow circumstances, and only in the most extreme emergency scenarios.

Would you agree with me that any use of the American military against American people should be an absolute last resort?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I welcome that statement, because the Administration has implied, in fact, explicitly said that it may use the American military for mass deportations, suppressing protests, responding to crime in cities and urban areas. I hope those statements prove to be untrue and exaggerations. But I welcome your statement.

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, I do have faith that President Trump will follow the law and do that appropriately.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, more than faith will be required. I think you will need to stand up and speak out, and, if necessary, resign if you are asked to do something that you feel is illegal or immoral.

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not believe President Trump will ever ask me to break the law.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. That is what we have heard, again and again and again, and history, I think, is a fair warning to us about what we can expect.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal. Senator Scott, you have been most patient.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman. Well, Mr. Feinberg, you are going to do a great job. You have got a great background. You believe in transparency. You believe in accountability. You are going to bring a breath of fresh air because you know in the private sector you have got to get results by holding people accountable but give them specific tasks to get done, and you are going to do a great job.

In the last 6 years, we have passed a significant amount of legislation through the National Defense Authorization Act to hold China accountable, whether it is we do not buy Chinese drones in our military and our Federal Government, we do not buy LIDAR [Laser Identification Detection and Ranging] technology, we stopped buying Chinese garlic that is made in sewer water in commissaries, we hopefully are starting the process of not buying Chinese drugs for our military. How important is it to our fighting men and women that we do not rely on Communist China, who has decided to be our adversary, for anything in time of war?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am sorry, Senator?

Senator SCOTT. How important is it to completely decouple from China from the standpoint of what our military is doing?

Mr. FEINBERG. It is very important and very difficult, but we have got to do it with urgency.

Senator SCOTT. So do you think we ought to be buying Chinese computers for our military?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

Senator SCOTT. Do you think we ought to be buying Chinese medicines for our military?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

Senator SCOTT. What about Chinese chips? How about Chinese telephones?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

Senator SCOTT. Can you name anything that is made in China that we ought to just go full force and be buying for our military?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, there are some completely commoditized, basic products that would not put our national security in jeopardy, but it is certainly a difficult problem.

Senator SCOTT. Yes. So the audits. You have invested in a lot of companies. Did you ever do an audit?

Mr. FEINBERG. Did I ever do an audit personally?

Senator SCOTT. Yes, no, but are you companies audited?

Mr. FEINBERG. All of them are.

Senator SCOTT. Yes, and if the auditor gave you some points that you had to get fixed by the next audit, did you do it?

Mr. FEINBERG. You better fix it by that audit.

Senator SCOTT. Yes, and if not, what would you do?

Mr. FEINBERG. If you don't have an audit, it's a big problem.

Senator SCOTT. Yes. So would you keep the CFO?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

Senator SCOTT. No. So our military does their own audit, and I think the Marines are the only ones that have completed an audit. So what do you think ought to happen to change the attitude with regard to audits of our Department of Defense?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, we have got to make it a priority, but in making audit a priority it will also help us on all types of understanding of financial metrics, our cost structure, our capabilities.

One thing that I observed is that while we have had some great, obviously, civilian leadership in the Pentagon, in my humble opinion at times some of the people in the operational execution jobs are not involved in detail. We are going to set up a war room, if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, and we are going to go over every program, every cost, line by line, with an army of people,

until it is done 24/7. We are going to understand where our costs are, why we do not have our audit, where the financial problems are, and then we are going to come up with a plan to fix it. But it has to be done line by line. It is a big task. It is a big war room. I think the Pentagon will support it, and I think the people will be excited to see it, as well.

Senator SCOTT. So in your private sector, as you made investments, a lot of times did you have to make tough decisions other people would not make? Was it as simple as that, they just would not make the decision to look at how things were being spent, or programs that did not work, or things like that?

Mr. FEINBERG. We had to make tough decisions all the time, and not everyone is right. But if you are afraid to act, the problem is worse.

Senator SCOTT. Right. So are you optimistic that you will be able to have a positive impact on getting military in a position that we are the most lethal fighting force out there?

Mr. FEINBERG. The Secretary has made that a big priority, and I think we can absolutely make great strides toward it.

Senator SCOTT. So let's assume you serve for 4 years. What would you like to say you accomplished at the end of those 4 years?

Mr. FEINBERG. Basically that I have helped the Secretary and the President improve DOD, preferably in total anonymity, and I will fade off into the sunset, some better performance, that hopefully I had some small role in.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Scott. Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Total anonymity is something all of us seek but none of us achieve.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, sir.

Senator KING. I understand your impulse.

I apologize for not being here. I was at a Veterans

Affairs Committee on the House side, and I know there has been a great deal of discussion about the potential cuts in the workforce. What I am interested in is the discussion of 8 percent. That is 70,000 people. What I am interested in, of you as a manager, how do you intend to go about that, because the cuts that have been occurring throughout the Federal Government so far have not been very thoughtful. For all probationary people, for example, that is not a terribly rational way to make these decisions. There may be great people who are probationary.

So what would the process be whereby you reduce the Department of Defense workforce by 70,000 people?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. Most of the cuts that are potentially—that might happen going forward have not yet been made, and hopefully, if I am fortunate enough to get through, I think that I can be helpful in the analysis, study, the considerations—

Senator KING. You are the chief operating officer. You should not be helpful. You are in charge of this process.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, sir.

Senator KING. I would like to know the process you intend to follow.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. Well, I do not know what role the Secretary would want me to play, but assuming I am in charge of that, we



would look at the exact detail of people, who is doing what, what jobs contribute what, what do we need, what do we not need. Study it carefully, and really come up with a concrete, specific, granular plan before we would have final——

Senator KING. So firing all probationary employees would not be how you would go about it. Is that correct?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, I was not involved in that. I do not know the detail, so not fair for me to say.

Senator KING. No, but you can comment on the rationality of firing all probationary employees, some of whom maybe have been in the Department for 10 years and just got promoted and are there for a probationary. Others may be the best person the Department has ever hired but they have only been there for a year. Do you think it is a rational process to simply arbitrarily fire all probationary employees?

Mr. FEINBERG. You know, I do not know how it was done. I do not know the considerations.

Senator KING. No, I am asking you not how it was done, but I am asking you if that approach is a rational way to reduce a workforce, fire everybody that has been hired in the last couple of years. Is that a good management practice? Is that what you would have done at Cerberus?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, I will say that we have over 900,000 civilian employees——

Senator KING. Right.

Mr. FEINBERG.—so while every person counts and is, of course, very important, there is going to be some change that the numbers are more significant.

Senator KING. That is not my question. There has been a stated goal of reducing the workforce by 8 percent. That is 70,000 people.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator KING. You are the chief operating officer. Presumably, you will be in charge of the process of reducing the workforce by 70,000 people. I want to know how you are going to do it, and one of my questions is, are you going to use the arbitrary yardstick of probationary employees? Yes or no.

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not know the considerations or the detail on what was thought before that cut. What I can tell you is, if I am in there, we will carefully look at the cuts, balance and weigh what we need and what we do not, be careful not to cut into mission, and do it in a granular, bottoms-up, person-by-person detailed way.

Senator KING. So does that answer, I mean, you are not going to cut all probationary employees arbitrarily? Is that a no to that question? It sounded like it. This is a pretty straightforward question. Are you going to fire all probationary employees first, to get to the 70,000? Yes or no.

Mr. FEINBERG. I have to look at the detail. I do not know yet. I do not think, and I do not know the considerations that were thought through before that cut, those cuts were made.

Senator KING. Okay. You are a smart guy.

Mr. FEINBERG. I just do not know.

Senator KING. You know what I am asking. I do not understand why you cannot tell me yes or no, whether this is going to be one of the tools you use to reduce the workforce.

Let me change the subject. There is a lot of discussion around here about reinvigorating the defense industrial base. Any thoughts on how we actually do that? I have heard that phrase a thousand times. I have never heard anybody say exactly how we go about it.

Mr. FEINBERG. I think we need to bring in new companies. We have great manufacturing capabilities in the United States. For example, if we were to call up General Motors or Ford, and say, "We need you in our defense base." Find ways under OTA [Office of Technology Assessment] or sole source where we can give new companies, especially the ones that scale and can operate. So much is talked about venture.

It is far more important, in my opinion, in scale and operations, are larger businesses. They are at a disadvantage competing with the big defense companies. They are not in the bids and proposals of contracting area. There are a lot of restrictions, a lot of tough things to get in there. We have got to make it easier for them. Maybe not the most competitive answer on the surface, but it will lead to much more competitive in the future.

I would go to a big manufacturing company, give them a shot on new programs that we think their capabilities can meet it, and let them figure out a way, under FAR, to give them a shot without a wide-scale competition with all our big defense companies, which, by the way, are too consolidated.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. As a matter of fact, Senator King and Mr. Feinberg, it is fact that General Mills actually used to be in the defense manufacturing business, so good point there.

Senator Schmitt, you are recognized.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good to see you again, Mr. Feinberg. I actually think of all the confirmation hearings that we are going to do, some of which get a lot more publicity than this one, I do not know if this is on C-SPAN. I do not know if it is being covered by anyone else. Based on your testimony earlier about being in obscurity, I am sure you are hoping it is not on any channel, I guess.

But I think this is actually one of the most important jobs in the entirety of the Federal Government, because I sit here, in bipartisan unison, we talk a lot about how we absolutely have to have procurement reform, and I think it is a huge waste for some of my Democratic colleagues to be railing away on this temper tantrum about DOGE, when they could be asking the questions that we have been told, you know, forever, that are actually top of mind, which is sort of with 14 seconds left my friend from Maine asked about how you actually get this kind of procurement reform.

So I would like to drill down just a little bit on that. You have talked about introducing more competition. That is certainly, I think, part of it. One thing specifically that I have heard from a lot of Missouri-based suppliers are these TINA requirements, and having this certified cost or pricing data for these relatively small or medium-sized businesses really is a barrier to entry for the work.

Will you support sort of trying to figure out how we can do better there so you actually have the requirements that are not so burdensome that you can actually have new entrants into the system, or they can actually more competitively bid?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, I am not familiar with that piece, but I understand the concept, and I will make sure I look at it and act on it appropriately.

Senator SCHMITT. Okay. I think that part of the reason why your job is so important is that so much of this is going to be a cultural shift that is difficult in an organization the size of the Department of Defense.

But this kind of mindset of spending what is allocated, how do you get to a place where we are actually maximizing the benefit of every dollar?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, first if we can prioritize it on the most important missions, which is hard and takes time, legacy spending, and really do it with discipline on what we really need. Then focus on how to be efficient and cut costs in our program management and on our operations.

Senator SCHMITT. I know that there has been a lot of advancements. I am sure you have seen this in the private sector, and by the way, I want to thank you. You have gotten a lot of criticism for being successful in the private sector, and I want to thank you for your divesting a lot to come take this position and share your expertise on behalf of the American people, to make our defense structure and the Pentagon the weapon systems the best they can be to protect Americans. So thank you for that.

Mr. FEINBERG. Thank you.

Senator SCHMITT. There has been a lot of changes and a lot of innovation as it relates to AI and automation and real-time data analytics that have not found their way to the Pentagon. How do you go about improving that culture within DOD? What have you done before that you think you can bring to the Pentagon?

Mr. FEINBERG. You know, I remember when our supermarket company, Albertson's—I should say what used to be the company—we went to the CEO and we said, “Boy, we’ve got Amazon in the grocery business. We’ve got all these guys using technology.” I remember the CEO said to me, “I don’t need any of that stuff. I have been doing this”—really good CEO—“I’ve been doing this my whole life. Leave me alone.”

Unfortunately, change is so important and you have got to be ahead of it. So it is a challenge going into departments that have done things a long time a certain way, and trying to make change, and being forceful about it. There certainly needs to be a partnership, I said earlier, with technology people to understanding the importance of operational, the operational people on the ground. You will find the best people, depending on who want this change and will embrace it, and those we are going to let run with it, give them autonomy, and let them drive it.

Senator SCHMITT. Well, one of the things, I think, that has been talked a lot about, which I agree with, is moving toward high-tech weapons systems that can be mass produced, like drones that are able to swarm. But I do think that we have got to be able to do both, which is one of the reasons why the next generation air de-

fense program is really, really important. I think that those advancements are good, and they may be the future. We have talked about this a little bit in my office.

The two places where we have absolute advantage over the CCP is our nuclear subs and our bomber and fighter fleets, the air superiority we have and the underwater superiority that we have. I know that you committed in my office that we would work together on that, to make sure that in addition to introducing some of the new high-tech systems that are available that we are not going to abandon the superiority we have in the skies.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, sir.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you. Senator Kelly.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Feinberg, thank you for your willingness to serve in this very important role.

I want to followup to some of the comments the Senator from Oklahoma, Senator Mullin, made earlier in response to Senator Kaine calling out Putin as a bully and this Administration's unwillingness to State the obvious. Senator Mullin said that Senator Kaine was spewing 100 percent mistruths constantly, essentially calling him a liar. He was referring specifically to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. In response, Senator Mullin mentioned Assad, Israel, Hamas, Houthis, Iran, hostages, and Dr. Death. I am pretty sure he did not mention Putin by name. I think the appropriate response would be to say that Putin was, in fact, a bully, but he did not say that. I think it is instructive that he would not even mention Vladimir Putin by name.

Putin is a bully, and I am not hearing that from this Administration. I do hear it from some people on the other side of the aisle, and I appreciate that. More people need to get off the sidelines on this issue. I think it is clear to many of us that Donald Trump blew up the Western alliance this past week, 80 years of an alliance, gone. It is disturbing.

Mr. Feinberg, earlier you said execution would be your job, and it is part of the job, but I do not think it is all of the job. You are going to often find yourself in the room. When things like, as an example, the SECDEF [Secretary of Defense] a few days ago said, when asked whether or not Russia invaded Ukraine, he said, "It's complicated." It is not complicated. Russia did, in fact, invade our ally, Ukraine.

So, Mr. Feinberg, would you agree that you have a role beyond just execution in offering some advice when you hear things that are just fundamentally inaccurate?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do think the Deputy should, at times, give his view on policy, for sure. I think it should be behind closed doors and not in public. I think it is important for the Deputy to understand that he, regardless of what his opinion may or may not be, that ultimately the Secretary and the President will decide what the policies are, and it is important to execute it.

Senator KELLY. That is fair. That is good to hear. Mr. Feinberg, did Russia invade Ukraine?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, going to my behind closed doors statement a second ago, I will just say this.

Senator KELLY. They moved tanks and troops and armored personnel carriers across the Ukrainian border. It is a pretty simple question.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. Well, here is how, if I may——

Senator KELLY. If you would ask the Chairman of this Committee if Russia invaded Ukraine, I am pretty sure—the Republican Chairman—I am pretty sure I would know the answer.

Mr. FEINBERG. I got you. However, there is a very tense negotiation going on now. It is important for America's interests. I do not have——

Senator KELLY. Mr. Feinberg, we have got to live in the real world here.

Mr. FEINBERG. But I do not——

Senator KELLY. I mean, things happen, and it is obviously to the rest of the world. I think it is obvious to Europe right now that we just blew up an alliance, and for us not to be able to say an obvious fact, it does not help a negotiation.

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, what I was trying to say, Senator, is I do not think some person who is not informed on this, not involved in discussions, should make statements public that could undermine what the President and the Secretary's intent is. I do have confidence that President Trump is very strong at negotiation, has a plan, and that he will find a good outcome for America.

Senator KELLY. Mr. Feinberg, people that are good at negotiations do not give up their two strongest negotiating points before the negotiation starts, which was membership in NATO and land that was taken away from the Ukrainians. So I do not agree with that, that he is a good negotiator. He actually, this week, has been a pretty bad negotiator. I want to make sure——

Mr. FEINBERG. Actually, President Trump, his policy has always been peace through strength, and he is very cunning on how he proceeds and how he approaches these. He is the first person to ever bring Russia to the table, where we are close, potentially, to a settlement. So I would like to see how it works out. I have confidence it will work out favorable to America.

Senator KELLY. Well, I do not share your optimism here.

Mr. FEINBERG. Understood.

Senator KELLY. I mean, we went into a negotiation giving up the two biggest points, and that is very troubling, and at the same time, in the same week, we blew up an 80-year alliance. Some of my Republican colleagues have a hard time even stating the obvious, that Russia did, in fact, invade Ukraine 3 years ago. Mr. Feinberg, I know you pay attention to the news, and I imagine if I asked you this question 3 years ago I am pretty sure I know what the answer would be. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Kelly. I recognize myself.

Mr. Feinberg, thank you for being here. Thank you to your family, those who are watching, your father, and for your family's years of service. I appreciate their introduction.

I was disappointed to hear earlier that some of my colleagues characterized your background in the private sector as negative. I think that is disappointing. I have got a different perspective, a positive perspective on that. There was a time in this country when business leaders were applauded for their patriotism and their con-

tribution to our country's efforts to win World War II. Mr. Feinberg, if your father is tuned in at this point in the hearing I want to thank him personally, and his generation.

Mr. FEINBERG. I appreciate it.

Chairman WICKER. They also helped us in the cold war. But to reform the DOD, I think we need someone who can work alongside the Secretary, harnessing the American spirit to ensure the United States outpaces our adversaries, someone who knows how to reform organizations, improve outputs, harness innovations. So not only, Mr. Feinberg, do you have extensive background investing in sectors critical to national security, but you also served on the President's Intelligence Advisory Board. So thank you for that.

In this position you had a front-row seat to the threats that our country faces. So Mr. Feinberg, can you discuss how your business background and service on the Intelligence Advisory Board makes you well suited to serve as the Deputy Secretary of Defense?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, it was an interesting job. It did not have a lot of ability to act, but we did a tremendous amount of analytics. Every department, all the areas of DOD, all the intelligence agencies, Homeland, FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], even, at times, Treasury and Commerce, when they affected national security, we got briefings from all of them. I took over 3,000 briefings. Fortunate to have on that board General Mike Hagee, who was former Commandant of the Marine Corps, as well as Charlie Allen, who was an intelligence legend. I guess he retired from CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] at 75.

So we had a real good group of people I was fortunate enough to learn from, and all these problems and shortages and issues were laid out for us. So it was an incredibly educational job, very frightening, and I think that laid the groundwork. You know, as a DOD intelligence contractor we have had a lot of classified contracts, but this was so much broader, and in some ways it was as broad of an education as you can get.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you for that, and again, thank you for your service on that board.

How can the military better harness American ingenuity and innovation to get emerging technologies into the hands of the warfighter faster?

Mr. FEINBERG. You know, the Government does not truly understand the private sector, and the private sector does not understand the Government, okay. Our companies, I wish they were more patriotic. They should be all in always helping us, but they are not. I wish they could understand that there are certain rules in government that are not made by the existing sitting people in government but they are just there, that they have to work by. I would love to get our private sector to be more flexible.

But I do think it is people that really understand the private sector, that understand how the boards think, how the general counsel thinks, what the legal impediments, the regulatory impediments are. We need to bring them into DOD, have them lead in these conversations with our private sector.

The big tech companies have done great things for America. They can do an awful lot more. We have to understand them, what drives them, and go to them with those thoughts, and I hope they

will also be more flexible. There is a world of opportunity for our private sector, like China is doing, way better than us. So it is a big area we need to get at.

Chairman WICKER. Thanks for that. Another issue. You know that the PPBE process, or the planning, programming, budgeting, and execution reform project—we talked about that in the office. Will you commit to implementing PPBE Reform Commission recommendation endorsed by the Department?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you. So if confirmed, do you commit to frequently updating Congress on your plan for the Replicator initiative and counter-UAVs at large?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you for that. That is an important initiative. Senator Schmitt mentioned that earlier in regard to the swarming technology and Replicator, so very important program. I hope you will pay significant attention to that.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you again. Senator Slotkin.

Senator SLOTKIN. Thank you. Thank you for being here, Mr. Feinberg. It was good to talk to you in my office. I think there were a lot of things that we can agree on—acquisition reform. If someone can crack that code we would be so much safer and so much better off vis-&-vis China. Getting China out of our supply chains for national security reasons. So I think there are a lot of things where I appreciated your views.

My questions, as again I previewed in our conversation, are just about you managing the Pentagon and managing this huge enterprise, and particularly in you serving as the chief operating officer of one of the biggest institutions in the world, and allowing others outside the Pentagon to access sensitive information.

I am a CIA officer, so I am putting these pieces together in what we have seen, and I just have to say that we know that DOGE is going into departments and agencies, collecting data. We know that they are using AI-supported software, access through the Microsoft Cloud to amalgamate that data. We know that they are feeding sensitive information into that system where they go, and that that information can be manipulated, swept up in cyberattacks, leaked. It is personnel information. It is sensitive information about our national security architecture. We know that DOGE has reportedly brought in their own servers, particularly into OPM, in order to handle this data.

Mr. Hegseth has said that he welcomes DOGE into the Pentagon. We know that they have started to look at places like CIA because they just sent an unclassified email with CIA recent hire names in an unclassified space. As a former CIA officer, you just blew the cover of someone who was going to risk their life abroad to protect our country.

So my question to you is what are you going to do when they come to you and they ask for that data? Will you give DOGE access to sensitive classified and personnel data of uniformed military bases and locations across the world?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yean, I mean, as Deputy, if I make it there, we have to follow the laws, and we cannot allow classified data that

is not legal to be in other people's hands, to move. So we will look at the laws closely. We will make sure that transfer, if it happens, is done by the appropriate ways. Now, of course, the President can decide what is classified and what is not, and he can declassify. So, of course, always subject to what the President wants to do and his wishes. However, I think it is our job to look at this carefully and make sure it is done properly.

Senator SLOTKIN. So separate from classified information, although you have stated that the President can just declassify things, will you give access to DOGE to sensitive personnel information about our uniformed military and families, particularly living abroad?

Mr. FEINBERG. Make sure that all the necessary laws and regulations are met.

Senator SLOTKIN. I just think, maybe it is because I come from the national security world, do you know how appetizing it is for our adversaries to have this data? Do you know how appetizing it is for them to understand how to get at a uniformed officer living in a dangerous place? It is not, for me, actually a political issue. It is quite literally an issue of safety and security, and as someone who has served abroad, this is, to me, an issue of major vulnerability.

Mr. FEINBERG. Senator, I will say, to your point, that in my past I have had compartmentalized programs and access for a long time, so I understand the issue completely, and I understand your concerns, and I will look at it closely.

Senator SLOTKIN. I just think that, I do not doubt your interest, but again, these are the conversations that are going to happen in the dead of night, when no one here in our Committee is watching. You are going to get a call at 7 p.m. that a bunch of 25-year-olds, who have never seen classified data in their life, who do not understand what personnel and base data could do in the hand of our adversaries, are going to get a hold of that. They are going to come to you, and you are going to have to press the button. All I have to say is we are counting on your, and our national security is counting on you to push back, have a spine, and say no.

Mr. FEINBERG. I understand the issue.

Senator SLOTKIN. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Slotkin. Senator Peters.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Feinberg, congratulations on your nomination to serve as the Deputy Secretary, and certainly I am happy we had a chance to meet in my office and talk about a variety of issues, including some of my concerns and focus areas for the Department of Defense. I enjoyed learning about your priorities for DOD moving forward, as well.

During our meeting you mentioned AI modernization and strengthening signals intelligence, in particular, as some of your top priorities. We certainly both share the same concerns about China's technological abilities and PRC-sponsored cyber actors that are really engaging against us on an ongoing, regular basis.

So my question for you, sir, is if confirmed, what policies or initiatives would you change or initiative to ensure the DOD stays at the tip of the spear for signals intelligence, and two, how will you



ensure the continued focus on our foreign adversaries like the PRC?

Mr. FEINBERG. Signal intelligence is an interesting point. I think there is significant risk in our ability to continue being successful in that collection, that is probably a better conversation for us to have in a SCIF [Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility]. But I think that is an incredibly important issue that has to be very carefully addressed.

On the PRC side, I am sorry, Senator, what was your question? I apologize.

Senator PETERS. Just how do we stay focused on them, particularly with signals intelligence.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. I mean, it is a key collection tool. Our methods and means and capabilities are good, but there is risk, both from technology point of view as well as how we approach it. Tough to talk about in a public forum. It is something I do have a fair amount of knowledge on, and I would love to talk to you in a different setting.

Senator PETERS. Okay. Well, I would love to followup with you on that, because I do believe it is critical, and I know it is a priority for you.

Mr. FEINBERG. Absolutely.

Senator PETERS. We want to make sure that we have the resources and the knowledge necessary to deploy effectively.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, and collection for us, especially on foreign technologies and knowing where they stand is super important to know what we have to spend. If we do not have that, we are going to spend everywhere.

Senator PETERS. Absolutely. So specifically artificial intelligence is at the top of that list, as well. My question for you is what policies or initiative would you believe will lead us to ensure that our warfighting capabilities are developed, not only for lethality, which is critically important, but also deployed responsibly, lawfully, and with appropriate safeguards for monitoring the procedures being used by these weapon systems.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. How you use AI is a tough balance, tough problem, because on one hand if you do not have effectively the authorities to use it, we will not be as lethal. But then using these authorities, at times, creates those kinds of problems. Boy, that is a tough one. We have got to carefully look at it in detail. For example, we are very strong on offensive cyber, which is a great capability. Not as good on defense. What should those offensive cyber capabilities, because that is a great asset of ours.

I look forward to working with you and other Senators on that right balance, and I think those conversations are best in a SCIF.

Senator PETERS. Very good. Another topic for us in the future, if confirmed.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, sir.

Senator PETERS. Currently the Air Force is programmed to lose about 1,000 planes without replacement. This will further exacerbate the Air Force's current State of being the oldest, smallest, and least ready perhaps in its history. Aviation leaders are characterizing this move as, quote, a "death spiral," and commented that no

enemy has done so much to harm the Air Force than the impact of arbitrary spending reductions.

Yet crude aircraft were not exempt from Secretary Hegseth's directive to scrub 8 percent from nonlethal programs. Luckily, corps readiness as a defense industrial base were protected areas in that cut. But I think it sends a conflicting message on the future of the Air Force fighter planes and missions.

So my question for you, sir, is if confirmed, you will be charged with executing Secretary Hegseth's priorities and helping him align the Total Force toward the country's national security objectives. Can you help give this Committee some reassurance that the leaders at OSD understand the need to continue investment in next-generation tactical fighters so that we can improve readiness and, in the process, surpass our adversaries.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, it is a really tough question. Some believe that we can go straight to full autonomous systems, we do not need a next-generation fighter, and we could use the F-35 updated to meet, you know, as a strategy. Others feel we really need the next-generation fighter, despite its expense and difficulty.

I do not have the classified briefings, nor would I have the classified briefings on China's J-20, which I think is an important consideration in that. But I do pledge to you that if confirmed, I will get right in the middle of those facts. Ultimately, that might be the Secretary's or the President's decision, but I look forward to working with you on that.

Senator PETERS. But you plan to dive in and offer concrete suggestions?

Mr. FEINBERG. Absolutely, in my opinion what I think we should do.

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

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Peters.

Senator SHEEHY. [Presiding.] I got a promotion. I have got the gavel now. Thanks for serving the country yet again, and being willing to do this. It is an incredibly important role, so thanks for taking it on, and for your family because I know it is a big sacrifice for them.

Mr. FEINBERG. Thank you for your service.

Senator SHEEHY. Would you run your business like they run the DOD right now?

Mr. FEINBERG. No, but I have had my bad days, too.

Senator SHEEHY. Yes, I think we all have. Well, first off, our nuclear triad was designed and built in the 1950s and 1960s, and it is definitely suffering from I would call antique equipment. What are your thoughts on how we can upgrade that and make sure it is ready for a 21st century adversary?

Mr. FEINBERG. Oh, boy, it is super important and tough one. We are way behind. We are way over costs. We are way late. I think we have got to bring the best manufacturing and operational people in America onsite, have a heavy recruitment so you can work with some of the great people in the Pentagon to understand it and really have an enormous, detailed, programmatic focus, operationally, line by line, what are we going to do, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, in detail.

I do not have an immediate answer other than let's get the right people on the ground. Let's go at it and look at it with incredible urgency, put a plan together, and start getting at it.

Senator SHEEHY. I think one of the most important aspects your role is going to be, the overhaul of our acquisition system. I know it has been talked about ad nauseum today. But I think very specifically there are products and capabilities that exist on the shelf that could be bought commercially, that have been developed at risk by private companies. I think one of the biggest errors we have made in the last half century in the American defense acquisition process is the Government is paying to develop technologies based on specifications that are often times based on past conflicts, and those specifications lag battlefield need. By the time that equipment is fielded it is either obsolete or just does not work in the first place.

So I would be curious, how do you intend to reform the acquisition system, and are you going to be able to heavily focus on commercially acquiring capabilities that already exist and commercially acquiring technology that is on the shelf already?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, there is a lot of opportunity and all the different commercial capabilities. But some of the program restrictions, requirements make it impossible for companies to compete with larger defense companies who do not have that capability. They end up being a sub, and they get stuffed as a sub.

I think DOD really has to look past the prime contractor, look into what the subs are doing, and take an active role in that relationship, and not rely on the big contractors to run these programs simply because they won the overall general contracting bid.

We have got to get into the programs, the detail of each program. What are our most important programs? What are we missing? Why are we behind costs? What technologies does the sub have that should be promoted, moved forward? As a contractor, I got caught in the Valley of Death all the time—better technology, no interest to the larger company to use it, does not help them, not profitable. I think DOD can get in the middle of that, to a degree. Not on everything. But there are a lot of opportunities to spur the innovation and capabilities of smaller companies, and we have got to do it.

Senator SHEEHY. Looks like I have been demoted again. So our defense acquisition paradigm is very focused on engineering the highest quality technology and building it oftentimes in a vacuum, to the highest engineering specifications. That has led to a lot of high quality stuff, but oftentimes not a lot of quantity. Our Navy is the smallest it has ever been in modern history. Our Air Force, as we heard, is short on aircraft.

There is a quality all its own in quantity. The ability to produce vast quantities to sustain a conflict and sustain supplying our warfighters has a quality all its own. I think the concept that quantity in and of itself creates quality, by iteration and by constant fielding in a very close customer feedback loop, because in this case the customer is not the procurement officer. Our customer is the lance corporal or the sergeant or the captain on the front line, fighting that enemy. I think we have to reorient the DOD back to the fact that their customer is not the contract officer. It

is not the procurement executive. It is not the PEO that is organizing. The customer is the warfighter.

In the small time remaining I would love to hear your thoughts, how do we return our ability to produce quantity quickly, and how do we ensure that what we are producing is what the warfighter actually needs?

Mr. FEINBERG. I totally agree, and we better do this urgently because developing autonomous capabilities, we are going to need mass quantities of drones with a central brain. If we do not achieve that, our national security is at risk.

So you have seen it from the private sector. I keep saying it, and I apologize for repeating it, requirements are gold-plated, rigid, inflexible. If a great technology or a great capability is out there, and that company does not put in a perfectly compliant bid, gets thrown out, versus a compliant bid, which may not meet the technical needs, let some of the program officers who are really good, let them run with it, give them a little more autonomy. Let them make some decisions on what is best for our country. Loosen up the requirement. Make it more based on mission than technical. Less gold-plated, quicker, more nimble. Let's look at what requirements we need up front. The Deputy better get into those requirements of the big programs in detail and not delegate that out to everybody else. It all starts with requirements.

Senator SHEEHY. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. [Presiding.] Thank you very much, Senator Sheehy. Senator Duckworth.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am looking at a Fox News article dated February 24, 2022, and it features Fox News commentator Pete Hegseth, and the headline is, "Russia invades Ukraine in largest European attack since World War II." Can you tell me if Russia invaded Ukraine, Mr. Feinberg? I mean, Mr. Hegseth said it.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, I understand.

Senator DUCKWORTH. It is easy. Yes or no. Did they invade Ukraine?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not feel that I should publicly comment in the middle of a tense negotiation when I am not privy to the facts, to undermine what potentially—

Senator DUCKWORTH. You are not privy to the fact whether or not Russia invaded Ukraine and started a war that has lasted for 3 years?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am not privy to the details of what is going on in the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, what the sensitivities are, what the President is trying to accomplish. So I would be afraid to speak out of turn and undermine that. I do have confidence that the President is very skillful at this, and he will find the right way to help the United States. He is the first guy that brought Russia to the table to even begin a conversation, and I—

Senator DUCKWORTH. The President is kneeling down to Vladimir Putin. I cannot believe the commander in chief of the greatest military on the face of the Earth, in my lifetime, is bowing down to Russia. Let me just change the topic.

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not—

Senator DUCKWORTH. First I would like to echo my colleagues in reinforcing my gratitude for the outstanding service of General Brown, Admiral Franchetti, and the other dedicated leaders who have been unfairly relieved in Trump and Hegseth's political motivated purge of senior DOD leadership.

Let me emphasize, this is not normal. The President does not typically replace nonpartisan generals and flag officers with his preferred choices. In fact, a President seeking to install loyalists among those who are supposed to give him the best military advice is highly concerning and dangerous, both to the good order and discipline of the uniformed services and to the country as a whole.

Mr. Feinberg, we had a productive conversation the last time we met, and I actually enjoyed it very much, and I appreciate your frankness during that conversation. I would like to reiterate my expectations for you, should you be confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense. Given the utter lack of qualifications of Secretary Hegseth, who himself admitted he was going to hire people smarter than himself to help run the Department, you will be the brains behind his leadership and lack of experience. You will be solely responsible for managing the budget and day-to-day operations of the DOD.

So it is imperative that you demonstrate to this Committee and to the American people your ability to provide the stability, expertise, and leadership necessary to ensure that Secretary Hegseth does not run the Department aground with indiscriminate budget cuts and unprecedented politically motivated and deeply damaging purges of highly qualified senior DOD leadership.

Mr. Feinberg, I have asked this of every nominee before this Committee, including yourself in my offices. If President Trump or Secretary Hegseth asked you to do something illegal, will you refuse to obey an illegal order?

Mr. FEINBERG. I won't obey an illegal order, and I do not believe either the Secretary or the President will ask me to do that.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Should you observe misconduct that is unbecoming or unlawful, will you report it?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Like I said earlier, you are it. You are second in command. The responsibility of an executive officer in the military is not only to execute their commander's vision but to be a voice for his staff and manage the ins and outs of his command. Mr. Hegseth will not manage the minutiae—you will.

Mr. Feinberg, I would like to know what are you going to do if the Secretary of Defense orders the pausing of a program critical to the readiness of the services?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am sorry, Senator. Orders what?

Senator DUCKWORTH. A pausing of a program that is critical to the readiness of our military services.

Mr. FEINBERG. Obviously, I work for the Secretary of Defense. If he does something that I think is a real problem, I will tell him. I will give him my view. Ultimately, I will follow the chain of command and execute what he wants, as long as it is lawful. I do think that he will make good decisions.

By the way, Senator, I also hope that I can hire, we can hire, if confirmed, a ton of people, a heck of a lot smarter than yours truly. It is great to bring in talent.

Senator DUCKWORTH. It does not take a lot to be smarter than the Secretary of Defense or be more qualified. That is a low bar, indeed.

Many of our recent nominees have been talking about hypotheticals, and I am glad that you are talking about some of the decisions that are being made. Mr. Hegseth has already shown a willingness to make some bad decisions. I mean, he ordered DOD to hastily propose an 8 percent, across-the-board cuts to the budget while exempting non-mission-essential expenses like the DOD's activities on the southwest border.

Mr. Feinberg, the DOD is not a place where we can afford to make mistakes. Are you going to allow an inexperienced team of software company interns to look at our most critical defense programs and make decisions that may impact our national security? Who is going to be at the wheel?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am sorry. You said——

Senator DUCKWORTH. Are you going to DOGE in there and start making cuts?

Mr. FEINBERG. So at DOD, and the Secretary said this, we are responsible for our own people. We are responsible for our actions and policies. DOD is in charge of itself. So no, DOGE is not in charge of DOD. We are looking forward to working with Elon Musk. He has great expertise and talent. He has great understanding of so many different things in DOD. He will provide counsel and advice. We are looking forward to hearing that.

But in the end, DOD is accountable to itself, must make its own decisions for its people and its policies. Unless, of course, the President says, "I want you guys to do this or that," and then, of course, we are going to do it.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Unless it is illegal.

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, ma'am.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Duckworth. Senator Banks.

Senator BANKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Feinberg, thank you for your incredible sacrifice that you are willing to make for our country and serving in this role.

There is already good news. President Trump asked Secretary Hegseth and yourself and others to go to the Pentagon and shake it up, make the Pentagon focused on the warfighter and preparing to fight and win wars instead of focusing on itself, the large bureaucratic blob that just day-to-day feeds itself rather than the mission of what the Pentagon should be doing.

The good news is that after 4 years of a historic recruitment crisis, the worst recruitment crisis in over 50 years of an all-volunteer force, the Army has already reported, since Donald Trump was elected President of the United States, those recruitment numbers have shot through the roof. What do you make of that?

Mr. FEINBERG. Well, I guess it does show there is a spirit, that morale may be improving, based on the President's leadership and what he has said to the American people. Hopefully if we can pur-

sue sound policies and execution and making some changes to improve DOD, that will increase morale more, that is what I have seen in the private sector, and we will have an even greater recruitment drive in the future.

Senator BANKS. Yes, I think that was well put. Lots of good signs across the board, early signs of us succeeding in a big way on recruitment.

One of the areas that I am concerned about, though, we talked about this in my office, China is beating us in a lot of areas, and one area is in hypersonics. Four years ago they launched a hypersonic ballistic missile. It orbited the full Earth, entered the Earth's atmosphere, narrowly missed its target. We did not know about it until it reentered our Earth's atmosphere.

We still have yet to launch a hypersonic missile of our own. As we talked about in my office, Purdue University, Notre Dame, in Indiana, Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center, on the front lines of hypersonics research and development. How important is more investment in hypersonics to the United States?

Mr. FEINBERG. Huge problem. We are underinvested. It is essential for our national security. I do not understand the thought process in the last Administration, which did not have it at high importance. Again, I am not the person to be sitting and making policies. My job would be to execute development, faster development, with reasonable cost, and quickly, of hypersonic capability.

But, at the same time, I mean, if you are totally reliant on your nuclear capabilities, because tactically you are slower, but you do not have hypersonics, that is a diplomatic nightmare. From a nuclear perspective, if the enemy is faster than you, boy, that is a problem. So we have got to get on that.

Senator BANKS. Yes, a big problem. You will be tasked with, as Secretary Hegseth's Deputy, with shaking up the acquisition system at the Pentagon. Have you put a lot of thought into that? I mean, your background is so perfect to go there and change the way acquisitions are done at the Pentagon. Have you given it some early thoughts about what you are going to do on day one to change it?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. You know, a lot of thoughts, and have worked with a lot of DOD companies closely with the Pentagon, so we have a decent knowledge of what is going on and how to improve it.

Senator BANKS. Good. You are incredibly qualified for this role. I look forward to working with you and partnering with you and Secretary Hegseth and others to make our military as strong as it can possibly be. Your background is perfect for the role. You have my full support. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. FEINBERG. I appreciate it. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you. Are there further questions? If not, let me just say, I think we have seen a display of super competence and intelligence and capability today, and I feel very, very good about the role that you will fill, Mr. Feinberg.

Today's hearing is concluded. I want to thank our witnesses for their testimony, and for the information of members, questions for the record will be due to the Committee within 2 business days of the conclusion of the hearing. We are now adjourned.

Mr. FEINBERG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Senator Reed.

[Whereupon, at 12:02 p.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Prepared questions submitted to Mr. Stephen A. Feinberg by Chairman Wicker prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

#### DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

*Question.* Section 132 of title 10, U.S. Code emphasizes that the Deputy Secretary must be “highly qualified for the position by reason of background and experience, including appropriate management experience.”

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

*Answer.* For the last 33 years, I have built my firm, Cerberus Capital Management. Our main focus is buying underperforming assets and companies and then working to drive operational and financial improvements. We take on hard complex problems that require significant operational and financial expertise. We have a large portfolio of over \$65 billion and have employed our turnaround strategies in hundreds of investments. Taking on these types of tough challenges is difficult, has significant risks, and is not a perfect science. So, people in our business will have some failures, as we have had, but overall, our track record has been very good over a long period of time.

I believe this operational background gives me valuable experience necessary as Deputy Secretary of Defense. Our Department of Defense faces very significant operational problems, delays, and cost overruns in building ships, submarines, and aircraft, modernizing our nuclear infrastructure, and developing a wide variety of military capabilities. I have spent a career attacking these types of problems in the companies and assets we have managed. Additionally, the Department of Defense has very significant financial problems. It has poor financial systems, struggles with understanding its cost structure, is unable to achieve transparent and consistent financial reporting, and has great difficulty in making accurate forward financial projections. These are exactly the types of financial problems that I have attacked in the companies and assets we have operated.

I served as Chair of the President’s Intelligence Advisory Board in the first Trump Administration. This board was effectively an analytical organization that studied in great depth both intelligence and U.S. national security shortages and problems and then provided advice to the White House on potential remedies. The board had a very strong team, including General Mike Hagee, former Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Charles Allen, a legendary 50-year veteran of the CIA. I took over 3,000 briefs during my chairmanship from all of the intelligence agencies, most parts of DOD, Homeland Security, Commerce, FBI, and most other parts of the U.S. Government that play a role in national security. This very broad exposure to our national security problems gives me a good sense of mission weaknesses and priorities in DOD. That knowledge is essential for the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

At Cerberus, we have bought dozens of companies involved in national security, many of which worked for DOD. So, I have significant experience with the Pentagon as a contractor and understand how it functions and is organized. This practical, hands-on knowledge helps me understand both the strengths and weaknesses of DOD and is invaluable for the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

*Question.* Specifically, what is your experience in the management of large, complex organizations?

*Answer.* At Cerberus, we currently own and have owned in the past over three decades, in whole or in part, large complex companies and assets in large complex structures. For example, today, one of our holdings is Albertsons supermarkets, which is a national chain with over 2,200 stores, 275,000 employees, and over \$70 billion in revenue. Today, we are one of the largest holders of non-performing loans in the world, with a portfolio containing hundreds of thousands of assets and a large complex multinational servicing operator managing the loans.

There are countless examples, past and present, that demonstrate one of our core skill sets at Cerberus is managing large complex organizations. A key to Cerberus’s success over many decades has always been our large multifaceted operational teams who drive the day-to-day management of our companies and assets.



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

*Answer.* As a DOD contractor over the past two decades, I have developed numerous ideas that should be considered. If confirmed, I will go very deep in due diligence to ensure these ideas are sound and determine if they should be pursued. Of course, the Secretary of Defense would have to support any implementation of these new concepts.

One idea would be to change how our DOD program requirements are structured, working with the JROC. I believe our program requirements need to be far less rigid, far less gold-plated, much easier to achieve, less costly, and much quicker to meet. We also need to stop changing the requirements once we set them. This is essential to be able to not only meet our program demands but also to meet them on time. This also enables us to have a much more nimble and agile acquisition capability that would also attract new entrants and promote more competition. This is not easy to achieve, but it can be done effectively.

Another idea would be to effectively sponsor some of our best private sector manufacturing companies to help them get into DOD. As we know, we have too few fully capable product providers at DOD as there has been way too much consolidation and too much concentration among the big major defense players. This reliance on a few companies leaves DOD very exposed. We have great manufacturing companies in the United States who are excellent in developing and scaling capabilities who aren't working with DOD today. There are creative ways under the FAR to provide sole-source non-competitive opportunities for these large companies to motivate them and make it possible for them to enter the defense industry. Often these types of companies, despite their great capabilities, are not conversant in DOD process or practices and requirements and competing with our big defense majors is very difficult. Being creative to give them help and a big jumpstart in non-traditional ways may be frowned upon because this is a departure from traditional competition-based acquisition policy. But it can be done legally and is very necessary to bring a much bigger part of our large industrial base into the defense industry. We have seen this in the past during wartime, and this is so important today due to a dearth of large manufacturing companies who know how to scale who are currently servicing DOD.

These are a couple of the dozens of ideas I have developed that need to be carefully looked at and determined if they are possible.

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

*Answer.* The biggest and most urgent challenge is to find a way to meet our mission needs within a finite budget. We have so many gaps in our national security capabilities and shortages in essential areas today that put our Nation in a troublesome, risky position. We must urgently prioritize the most important gaps and shortages and fix this problem. We can achieve that, but it starts with leadership. We must be realistic and transparent about these issues and, with great urgency, put the necessary plans in place and execute them.

What makes this more difficult is the fact that our most capable and toughest competition is the Chinese, who get funded not only by their budget but also by their private sector, which often effectively works for the government. So, the Chinese have better funding and an all-in national commitment to becoming the most powerful and dominant nation in the world. Closing all our gaps is very difficult because China will keep moving the goalposts on us.

On top of all that, the United States has significant budget constraints and currently doesn't have the necessary money to fix our current weaknesses and compete effectively with China.

This is a very tough problem, but there are ways to attack it. We must manage our own finances at DOD better to ensure we are getting the maximum out of the dollars we have. We have to run the department much more efficiently by cutting significant costs from unnecessary departments inside DOD and from legacy programs still funded by DOD. We have to develop much better systems and financial metrics to attack our efficiency problems. There are significant dollars to be found through better operations and decisionmaking.

Another big piece of the solution is getting far more help from our private sector. We have the greatest private sector in the world, and they can help us close the funding gap and the capability shortages. To get the private sector more involved, we must focus on how to approach the relationship. We need private sector people in government who fully understand how our best private companies operate, what their legal and regulatory issues are, what their shareholder issues are, how their Board of Directors will respond to the government, and what it takes to get their

help and partnership. Finally, we need to understand what issues and impediments the general counsels will bring and how we can solve them. Yes, our private sector companies should be more patriotic and easier to work with all the time. But that's not reality, and through significant private sector expertise inside DOD, we can really start driving great partnerships with the private sector.

Of course, there are so many other big challenges for the deputy to involve themselves with, but progress in the above areas will go a long way.

*Question.* Section 132 of title 10, U.S. Code, provides that the Deputy Secretary of Defense shall perform such duties and exercise such powers as the Secretary of Defense may prescribe. Except as expressly proscribed by law or order of the President or Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary has full power and authority to act for the Secretary of Defense on any and all matters.

What do you perceive to be the duties and powers of the Deputy Secretary most critical to the national defense?

*Answer.* The Deputy Secretary will perform duties and exercise powers as prescribed by the Secretary of Defense. Historically the Deputy Secretary has the primary responsibility of managing the day-to-day activities and management of the Pentagon, to include decisionmaking related to budget and resourcing, acquisition, and research and engineering. Additionally, the Deputy Secretary assumes the duties of the Secretary of Defense when the Secretary is unable to do so.

*Question.* What other duties and/or powers would you expect the Secretary of Defense to prescribe for you, if confirmed?

*Answer.* In his hearing, Secretary Hegseth stated his intent to designate the Deputy Secretary to manage the day-to-day activities regarding budget and resourcing, acquisition, research and engineering, and overall management of the Pentagon. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department prioritizes fiscal accountability, efficiency and lethality in accordance with President Trump's direction to achieve Peace through Strength, and Secretary Hegseth's priorities of reviving the warrior ethos; rebuilding our military by matching threats to capabilities; and reestablishing deterrence by defending our Homeland.

#### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

*Question.* Federal ethics laws, to include 10 U.S.C. § 208, prohibit government employees from participating in matters where they, or certain family members or organizations with which they have certain relationships, have a financial interest.

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

*Answer.* Yes.

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

*Answer.* Yes.

*Question.* Do you commit, without qualification, if confirmed, to decisionmaking on the merits and exclusively in the public interest, without regard to private gain or personal benefit?

*Answer.* Yes.

#### CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY

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

*Answer.* Civilian control of the military is a foundational principle in democratic governance, ensuring elected officials maintain control and authority over armed forces. This principle prevents military leaders from exerting undue influence on political decisions, which in turn safeguards democratic institutions and civil liberties.

I also believe that civilian oversight is meant to foster transparency and public trust. It emphasizes accountability, because military actions must align with the elected government's policies and priorities. By maintaining a clear separation between military and political realms, this principle promotes stability, and ultimately it ensures that military power is used responsibly.

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

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure that decisionmaking in the Department of Defense is in accordance with the United States Constitution and applicable laws and aligned with elected officials' policies and national interests. The Deputy Secretary

reinforces the principle of civilian control by integrating civilian perspectives into budgetary and acquisition processes and ultimately ensuring that military capabilities are developed and funded in a way that reflects democratic governance and public accountability.

2022 NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY (NDS)

*Question.* The 2022 NDS outlines that the United States faces a rising China, an aggressive Russia, and the continued threat from rogue regimes and global terrorism. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the NDS Commission testified in July 2024 that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea have formed an “axis of aggressors” supporting each other’s military aggression and illegal wars.

What is your assessment of the military threat posed by the People’s Republic of China?

*Answer.* Both the 2018 and 2022 National Defense Strategies pinpoint the People’s Republic of China as posing the most significant challenge for the United States Department of Defense. The most threatening scenario facing the Department is a sudden PRC attempt to seize Taiwan by force. A successful invasion of Taiwan could severely damage U.S. trade, alliances, and global influence.

Xi Jinping’s stated goal of annexing Taiwan, his directive to the Chinese military to be ready for such an operation by 2027, and China’s significant and ongoing buildup of capabilities designed to hold the Joint Force at risk suggest that China poses a significant and growing threat across the near, medium, and long term.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the military threat posed by Russia?

*Answer.* The 2018 and 2022 National Defense Strategies both recognize Russia as a threat to the United States and Europe, and Russia also destabilizes several other regions around the world. Despite facing international sanctions since 2014, which were further strengthened during the first Trump Administration, Russia has maintained a capable military, developed strategic capabilities, and increased production of crucial military equipment.

Of particular concern is Russia’s expansion of its nuclear arsenal, posing a threat to the United States Homeland, as well as its tactical nuclear weapons, which threaten its European and Asian neighbors. Russia also presents challenges in cyberspace, information warfare, undersea warfare, space, and the Arctic.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the military threat posed by collusion among Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea?

*Answer.* China, Russia, Iran, and North Korean cooperation in Ukraine, and in other regions of the world, suggest a common interest in weakening United States influence and alliances globally.

These countries share technology and sell military equipment amongst themselves, circumventing or muting the impact of sanctions. This collaboration allows them to develop their military capabilities, fund operations, and challenge U.S. interests. Examples include the transfer of drones between Iran and Russia, Chinese purchases of Iranian oil, and North Korean special forces fighting alongside Russian troops in Ukraine.

*Question.* Are there significant opportunities that, in your view, DOD has been unable to leverage, or has leveraged only in part, since the NDS was published in 2022? If so, how would you correct this situation, if confirmed?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the Department of Defense has not fully utilized the potential of our industrial and innovation bases to deliver necessary military capabilities efficiently and at the required pace. While there have been efforts to develop numerous, dispersed, and expendable capabilities quickly, a shift in mindset is crucial.

The DOD’s focus needs to move away from expensive, overly sophisticated platforms that take years to develop and are difficult to replace, toward embracing rapid innovation and scalable production. If confirmed, I will prioritize working to streamline the requirements and acquisition process.

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

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

*Answer.* Timely issuance of the Secretary’s strategic guidance to the Department, including through the National Defense Strategy and the Defense Planning Guidance, ensures that strategy is the driving force behind all of the Department’s resourcing decisions, and that U.S. strategic priorities are infused throughout the

Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution cycle. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary in the development of this guidance and in overseeing its implementation across the Department.

#### DOD READINESS

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

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

*Answer.* Readiness is a multi-dimensional challenge that involves tradeoffs between near-term and long-term priorities. Certain readiness spending can increase our ability to maintain current operations but spending to maintain high readiness in the present has a high depreciation rate. If we do not expect to "fight tonight," readiness dollars might better be spent on long-term force structure and modernization investments to ensure that we are ready for the advanced challenges we may face in 5–7 years.

If confirmed, I will ensure that short-term readiness investments are tailored to maintain a ready, deterrent force, but ensure that we do not cannibalize our ability to modernize the joint force for the future fight. I would direct the Military Departments and Services to do a line-by-line review investments in mobility, logistics, maintenance, and sustainment capabilities, as well as to understand where increased ally and partner cooperation can enable us to optimize our forward posture.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you balance force structure and readiness demands, particularly with respect to rotational forces in the United States Indo-Pacific and Central Command areas of responsibility (AOR), against the imperative to modernize or restructure current forces to meet NDS requirements?

*Answer.* Continuous rotation of troops into AORs ensures that forward forces are always at a high level of readiness. However, constant rotation also imposes costs upon the Services as they balance spending on readiness against spending on modernization. Given the strategic environment, we must maintain high readiness in the Indo-Pacific, and, if confirmed, I intend to carefully review which forces are deployed forward.

Additionally, arrangements with Allies and partners can reduce the readiness impact on forward forces. If confirmed, I will review the force posture in CENTCOM to ensure that we have the right force mix available and ready both in the AOR and over the horizon for the dynamic situation in the region.

*Question.* If confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, how would you prioritize the needs for continued readiness, force structure, and modernization?

*Answer.* Balancing readiness, force structure, and modernization is a constant challenge for the Department of Defense. If confirmed, I would work to ensure first that investments in these three categories are focused on warfighting and lethality to enhance the credibility of our deterrent. We should be prioritizing resource allocation against the most significant threats and particularly directed toward the Department's plans to deal with those threats.

*Question.* How would you assess the current readiness of the DOD components across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training to execute operational plans in support of the 2022 NDS?

*Answer.* I do not have access to classified briefs on operational plans and cannot accurately assess current readiness levels, but I understand that the Joint Force is organized, trained, and equipped to execute operational plans and achieve our national objectives.

If confirmed, I will work with my staff, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the combatant commanders to review our operational plans and our current states of readiness across these domains to ensure that our forces can credibly fight and win our Nation's wars. I believe it is critically important that our joint force maintains its position as the most capable, lethal force in the world.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY BUDGET

*Question.* In its July 2024 report, the Commission on the National Defense Strategy recommended that Congress provide real growth for defense spending, at an annual average rate of three to 5 percent above inflation.

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

*Answer.* Achieving peace through strength requires investment and sacrifice as a Nation. We must make the right investments to rebuild our military, ensuring it

remains the strongest and most lethal in the world to deter adversaries considering actions that would be detrimental to American interests.

*Question.* Many observers assert that the only way to force DOD leaders to make the “hard choices” to divest of lower priority or underperforming programs, is to constrain the Department fiscally.

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

*Answer.* I will measure the adequacy of our budget by its ability to match threats to capabilities and reestablish deterrence by defending the Homeland. If confirmed, I expect to lead a thorough review of Defense Department spending, incorporating bottom-up and top-down reviews to ensure that the President’s priorities are funded within the guidance provided by the Office of Management and Budget.

If confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to improve efficiency and increase readiness by rapidly fielding innovative technologies, reviving our defense industrial base, reforming our acquisitions process, and passing a financial audit.

*Question.* Do you believe that this approach leads to more effective and efficient decisionmaking by DOD leaders?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure that the Secretary of Defense is presented with the most robust and accurate data to support the President’s Budget Request. The Department must operate within the constraints set by Congress, but will actively seek areas for lawful reduction and realignment to meet the Secretary’s priorities for force readiness and lethality. If confirmed, I will embrace fiscal restraint as an opportunity to reduce wasteful spending and prioritize the most effective programs and systems.

*Question.* The Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) process has remained fundamentally unchanged since its inception more than half a century ago.

Do you believe the PPBE process results in the proper allocation of resources according to the strategic priorities at the Department of Defense?

*Answer.* The current geopolitical landscape demands speed and agility. The current PPBE process was designed for a postindustrial age. Today, we are in an age of rapidly changing technology where technology is obsolete almost as soon as it is developed.

Not having yet been a part of the PPBE process inside the Department, I looked through the Commission on PPBE Reform’s Final Report from March 2024 and the Department’s PPBE Reform Implementation Plan that was released recently in January by the former Administration so that I could learn more about the process of PPBE, how that unfolds inside DOD, and what reform efforts are currently underway. If confirmed, I look forward to implementing applicable recommendations.

If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that allocation processes align resources to President’s Trump strategic priorities, delivering capabilities that advance the goals of the Department, and closing gaps through the rapid fielding of emerging technologies.

*Question.* What changes would you make, if any, to the PPBE process to improve both resourcing decisions within DOD and information flow about those decisions to the Congress?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working with OSD staff principals to determine needed changes to the process to ensure we have the strongest tie between strategy and resources to support the Administration’s priorities, while ensuring open communication between the Department and Congress.

*Question.* The congressionally appointed Commission on PPBE Reform released its final report in March 2024, and Congress has directed the DOD to establish a cross-functional team to oversee the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations.

If confirmed, what would you do to implement the recommendations of the Commission, and how would you work with Congress to ensure success?

*Answer.* I understand that the former Deputy Secretary of Defense signed a PPBE Reform Implementation Report that was made publicly available in January 2025, which provides an overview of the Commission’s recommendations the previous Administration wanted to support.

I have read that as well as the PPBE Reform Commission’s Final Report from March 2024 and concur with many of its ideas to streamline the PPBE process and provide additional flexibilities to the Department of Defense while maintaining the appropriate level of congressional involvement.

If confirmed, I look forward to understanding the efforts underway in the Department, and working with my staff principals and Congress to determine how those proposed reforms could improve the process, while also pursuing other improve-

ments to ensure DOD maximizes its allocated resources to support our Defense priorities.

*Question.* Former Secretary of Defense Mattis stated, “If you don’t fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition.”

What are your views on the role of the State Department and other non-DOD departments and agencies in achieving U.S. national security objectives?

Answer. DOD will need to work with multiple U.S. Government departments and agencies to advance national security priorities. Diplomacy and economic and trade policy play important roles in achieving our objectives. If confirmed, I would coordinate with my colleagues across the Government to ensure resources collectively support the national security objectives outlined by the President and Secretary of Defense.

*Question.* Do you believe non-DOD departments and agencies have been sufficiently resourced to appropriately contribute to U.S. national security objectives?

Answer. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to review other agencies resourcing and provide recommendations to OMB.

#### VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

*Question.* The Deputy Secretary of Defense and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff often partner to lead the Department in addressing emergent issues and policy challenges that require the integration of civilian and military expertise and perspective.

If confirmed, how would you structure your relationship with the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Answer. A strong, productive relationship between the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff is critical to ensure we bring the most lethal capabilities into the hands of our warfighters. If confirmed, I will count on the Vice Chairman to provide me the best military advice and faithfully represent the independent voice of the warfighter.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you allocate particular responsibilities to the Vice Chairman and yourself as co-chairs of the Deputy’s Management Action Group?

Answer. My understanding is the Deputy’s Management Action Group (DMAG) is the key forum for making the difficult but necessary resourcing recommendations and associated risk calculations that enable the Secretary to realize the President’s vision of Peace through Strength.

If confirmed, I will use this body to provide the Administration’s guidance in our national defense and security and solicit from the pertinent Department leadership how they will enact that guidance and hear their concerns. As the body’s co-chair, the Vice Chairman provides an indispensable, independent warfighter’s perspective within DMAG deliberations.

*Question.* In your view, how could the Deputy’s Management Action Group be more effective in ensuring that DOD issues with resource, management, and broad strategic and/or policy implications are addressed in a manner that aligns with the Secretary of Defense’s priorities, planning and programming schedule? Please explain your answer.

Answer. As the Department’s principal governance forum for management actions including planning, programming, budgeting, and execution (PPBE), and strategic and policy guidance, the DMAG is critically important. If confirmed, I will consult with the DMAG’s co-chair, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary’s Principal Staff Assistants to drive and assess compliance with the President’s and Secretary’s priorities, foster alignment on cross-cutting issues, threat assessments and trends, vulnerabilities, and strategic matters and evaluate resource and policy implications.

*Question.* If confirmed, what, if any, recommendations would you make to revise or refine the Joint Requirements Oversight Council process?

Answer. If confirmed, modernizing and preparing the Department for future contingencies will rank among my top priorities. The warfighter’s independent role in developing effective and interoperable capabilities is vital. I am also aware of the multifaceted approach to requirements, acquisition, and programming reform being championed by Chairman Wicker and Secretary Hegseth to accelerate delivery of capabilities to the warfighter.

If confirmed, I pledge to expeditiously reform how the Department attains capability through the entire Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE), Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) which includes many elements, including the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), and Defense Acquisition System (DAS) processes.

## ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

*Question.* The 2022 NDS stresses that mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships are crucial to U.S. success in competition with, deterrence of, and potential conflict against long-term strategic competitors.

What is your view of the strength of our current alliances, relationships, and partnerships, and the trust our partners have in the willingness of the U.S. to meet its obligations? If confirmed, how would you enhance that trust?

*Answer.* The United States boasts a formidable network of alliances and partnerships, providing an unparalleled strategic edge through collective defense with our Allies and partners. We must remain committed to fostering balanced relationships, recognizing that strong alliances require mutual contributions to thrive. Encouraging increased defense spending and shared responsibility from our Allies and partners is crucial to ensure fairness and sustainability. By fostering long-term cooperation and consistent support, we can empower our Allies and partners, bolster their capabilities, and strengthen the foundation of mutual trust.

*Question.* If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to strengthen existing U.S. alliances and partnerships in each combatant commander's geographic AOR for long-term strategic competition?

*Answer.* I have not been briefed on classified material, but I understand the challenge we face is not confined to one region or one area of expertise. Every Combatant Command, whether focused on a specific geographic area or a specialized military function, plays a crucial role in maintaining our advantage. This will be achieved through ongoing strategic planning, security cooperation, military diplomacy, and other initiatives. If confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to dive into the details and my focus will be on achieving the objectives laid out in the National Defense Strategy.

*Question.* Industrial and technological integration between alliance members and international partners are critical to ensuring interoperability and economies of scale when modernizing and maintaining combat forces.

Based on your experience, do you have any recommendations for how DOD can leverage foreign military sales and industrial base integration as a tool to improve our own military systems, as well as improve our ability to fight by, with and through our allies and partners?

*Answer.* I have not been briefed on specific details, but I understand DOD has taken steps to allow for more seamless integration and interoperability with allied technology. Leveraging Foreign Military Sales (FMS) to enable our Allies and partners to procure interoperable and complementary capabilities improves our ability to fight by, with, and through our Allies and partners. This interoperability is enhanced through joint training and exercises. Additionally, FMS can support our broader acquisition strategy by driving down unit costs for both the United States and our Allies and partners, enabling us to collectively deliver more advanced capabilities than if a program was not designed for export. Industrial base integration can also improve military systems and the production of platforms and materiel, enabling us to bring in allied technology and expertise as well as allied production capacity.

If confirmed, I will collaborate closely with the Under Secretaries of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment and Policy to identify and investigate opportunities to craft acquisition and allied and partner force development strategies to leverage their expertise and capitalize on economies of scale.

## UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND (AFRICOM)

*Question.* AFRICOM has minimal assigned forces and, as a result, is required to compete for the vast majority of its United States Forces in the global force management process.

What is your assessment of the availability and predictability of forces and associated capabilities to support the AFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan, the NDS, and other emergency requirements?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that USAFRICOM has fewer allocated and assigned forces than most other Combatant Commands and competes for capabilities when it faces an emerging requirement. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting review of our global force posture to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USAFRICOM are sufficient to achieve our goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

*Question.* Are there any changes you would implement to the allocation or assignment of forces to AFRICOM, if confirmed?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to supporting review of our global posture to assess whether existing missions and forces assigned to USAFRICOM are suffi-

cient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

*Question.* What should be the primary objectives of the DOD specifically, and the United States more broadly, in the AFRICOM AOR?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Department has two primary objectives in the USAFRICOM AOR. The first is to degrade terrorist groups' ability to strike the United States. The second objective is to counter China's attempts to co-opt African governments in ways that undermine United States strategic interests. There is not a military-only solution to these major challenges. I recognize that to achieve progress toward those two main objectives we must devise whole-of-government strategies, coordinating DOD resources with the entire interagency and Allies to address a variety of issues affecting Africa. Additionally, the Department must increase its work with Allies in the AOR to build operational independence so that our regional partners can undertake missions on their own.

*Question.* What is your assessment of United States counterterrorism strategies in the AFRICOM AOR? If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you propose to these strategies?

Answer. My understanding is that the current United States counterterrorism strategy in the USAFRICOM AOR is to disrupt violent terrorist organizations, with continued focus on ISIS and al Qaeda affiliate groups, especially those with the intent and capability of posing a direct threat to the United States Homeland, U.S. personnel and facilities, or vital U.S. national interests.

I understand the Department prioritizes working by, with, and through Allies and regional partners to disrupt and degrade terrorist threats. If confirmed, I will look for ways to further improve on our efforts to cooperate with and strengthen Allies and regional partners as we pursue our shared counterterrorism interests.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the strategic objectives of Russia and China in Africa? In what areas, if any, do these oppose United States and partner objectives?

Answer. The People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia have both deepened their engagement in Africa. The PRC has sought to bolster relationships with African countries and their militaries and increase investment in Africa, and where possible create dependencies. The PRC has looked to gain African countries' support for its global policy objectives. Conversely, Russia uses irregular means to assert influence in Africa, including through paramilitary deployments, seeking to create dependencies on Russian military assets.

My understanding is that many of these activities are not in line with United States and partners' shared objectives for stability and security. For example, the PRC's lending practices create economic risk for African countries. Russian private military companies and paramilitary forces have contributed to instability within Africa. Both use engagement in Africa in ways that prioritize their own gain.

#### UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND (CENTCOM)

*Question.* In your opinion, what are the key United States national security interests in the Middle East? Please explain your answer.

Answer. In my opinion, the key United States national security interests in the Middle East are: 1) preventing, deterring, and disrupting credible terrorist threats to the United States Homeland, 2) ensuring the free flow of goods and trade 3) acting as a security enabler and integrator for our partners and Allies, 4) preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, and 5) ensuring the defense of Israel.

It is my understanding that counterterrorism remains a high priority national security interest in the CENTCOM AOR. Many of the terrorist groups that have either the intent or capability to strike the United States Homeland or United States personnel have their ideological, financial, or operational base originating in the Middle East, as we have seen in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen.

The United States has strong partners in the Middle East with whom we have shared interests, long-standing cooperation, and substantial economic and technological trade ties. The Department has a number of mechanisms through which we can provide security cooperation, Foreign Military Financing, Foreign Military Sales, joint training and exercises, and forward presence to strengthen the ability to disrupt and defeat shared threats.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense stands ready to support the President's National Security Presidential Memorandum on Iran.

*Question.* In your opinion, to what extent does achieving United States national security interests in the Middle East require a continuous United States military presence, and in your view is the current United States Force presence appropriately sized? Please explain your answer.



**Answer.** It is my understanding that the Department maintains the capability to surge forces anywhere in the world if needed during a crisis. As a result, United States Forces are able to execute multiple missions in the Middle East—to include deterring Iran and its proxies.

If confirmed, I will work with OSD components, the Joint Staff, and the combatant commanders to review the global U.S. Force posture and reassess the optimal level of forces assigned to CENTCOM in order to achieve our regional and national defense strategy goals, given the evolving geostrategic environment.

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

**Answer.** The United States collaborates effectively with multiple Allies and partners in the region as well as European Allies to counter threats emanating from within the CENTCOM AOR. If confirmed, I would seek increased opportunities to enable regional partners to counter terrorist groups and defend their sovereign territories. Our partners can, and must, do their part.

If confirmed, I would also look to increase cooperation with regional and European partners in countering the Iranian Threat Network and the Iranian missile and UAV threat. Joint missions, security cooperation, missile defense integration, and capacity building are effective mechanisms for strengthening the ability of our Allies and partners to counter threats within the AOR.

**Question.** What threat does Chinese and Russian involvement in the Middle East pose to United States operations and interests and to what extent does a continuous United States presence counter their involvement? In your view, what other policy tools might be useful in this regard?

**Answer.** China is working to expand its influence and presence in the Middle East, increase PRC-origin defense sales, and put its thumb on the scales of the global energy markets. China's efforts to expand their technological and defense cooperation in the region have the potential to put at risk sensitive United States technology and our national security. The Department must be vigilant to ensure these activities neither pose a counterintelligence risk to United States Forces or operations nor undermine United States security partnerships.

Russian involvement in the region has had negative implications for United States interests in the region, two examples being Russia's strategic partnership with Iran and previous support for the Assad regime. Russia is on its back foot in the region after the fall of the Assad regime, but we must remain vigilant on this front.

The United States can counter negative PRC and Russian involvement in the region through strong partnerships and empowerment of our Allies and partners across a full spectrum of activities, to include security assistance, regional integration efforts, and military cooperation through training, exercises and other activities.

#### *Iran*

**Question.** What is your understanding of the objectives of the United States national security interests with respect to Iran? What is the role of the United States Military in this strategy?

**Answer.** The Department of Defense must stand ready to support the President's National Security Presidential Memorandum on Iran, which establishes that: 1) Iran should be denied a nuclear weapon and intercontinental ballistic missiles; 2) Iran's terrorist network should be neutralized; and 3) Iran's aggressive development of missiles, as well as other asymmetric and conventional weapons capabilities, should be countered.

**Question.** What is your assessment of the current military threat posed by Iran? What is your assessment of the threat posed by Iranian proxy groups?

**Answer.** Iran poses a significant threat to the security of the United States and its Allies and partners. Last year, Iran launched two major missile and drone strikes against Israel from Iranian territory. In addition to Iran's conventional military, Tehran also leverages proxy forces to launch kinetic attacks and advance their interests across the Middle East. These forces threaten both United States Forces, as well as those of our partners. Iran also continues to inch closer to gaining a nuclear weapons capability, which is unacceptable. Iranian acquisition of a nuclear weapon would threaten United States interests and partner security, provide Iran a shield behind which they could engage in more aggressive proxy activities, and increase the risk of nuclear accidents or miscalculation.

**Question.** In your view, are United States Military Forces and capabilities currently deployed to the CENTCOM AOR adequate to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats posed by Iran?

**Answer.** It is my understanding that the Department maintains the capability to surge forces anywhere in the world if needed during a crisis. As a result, United States Forces are able to execute multiple missions in the Middle East—to include deterring Iran and its proxies.

It is my understanding that the Department is in the process of reviewing the global U.S. Force posture to reassess the optimal force posture for CENTCOM to achieve our national defense strategy goals, given the evolving geostrategic environment.

**Question.** In your opinion, can Iran be sufficiently deterred through military force alone? Please explain your answer.

**Answer.** I believe the Department must continue to support the President's stated intent to address Iran's malign activity through non-military tools, including economic pressure and diplomacy. At the same time, it is the Department of Defense's role to ensure the President is armed with the best possible military options. The Department must remain prepared to present the President with options to deter Iran's malign activity and respond militarily if directed.

#### *Israel*

**Question.** In your opinion, what are United States national security objectives in Israel?

**Answer.** Strongly supporting Israel's ability to defend itself is a key United States national security objective. It is my understanding that the Department of Defense supports Israel's security by helping facilitate security assistance to Israel, extensive military cooperation through CENTCOM channels, and through coordination with the Israelis to help secure the release of hostages held by Hamas, to include American citizens.

**Question.** In your opinion, what should DOD's role be in supporting Israeli efforts to degrade and defeat Hamas?

**Answer.** Hamas's horrific and unprovoked attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, killed over 1,200 innocent people, including 46 Americans. The United States should support Israel by providing the security equipment and munitions that Israel needs to defeat Hamas and never again allow a Hamas-style attack on Israel.

#### *Syria and Iraq*

**Question.** What is your understanding of current United States strategy and objectives in Syria? How have those objectives changed, if at all, in light of the recent fall of the Assad regime?

**Answer.** It is my understanding that the Department's primary objective in Syria is to support the enduring defeat of ISIS. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to review our objectives in the region in light of the fall of the Assad regime.

**Question.** What role, if any, should DOD play in supporting a peaceful democratic transition in Syria? Please explain your answer.

**Answer.** The President has stated his position that the United States should not get involved in the political affairs of Syria. If confirmed, I will support the orders from the Commander-in-Chief. The United States military remains focused on the defeat of ISIS and other threats to the Homeland. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department continues to work with interagency partners to ensure alignment and support on goals outside of the Department's direct jurisdiction.

**Question.** From a DOD perspective, what must be done to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS? What non-military efforts are needed for the enduring defeat of ISIS?

**Answer.** Ensuring the enduring defeat of ISIS requires a whole-of-government effort. The United States military's role in the region supports whole-of-government counterproliferation strategies, defense of United States personnel and bases in the region, defense of Israel, deterrence of regional conflict, and counterterrorism operations. United States military counterterrorism operations rely on the intelligence community to maintain awareness of ISIS' goals and activities as they adapt to the current environment. Diplomatic efforts are also necessary to push those countries whose citizens are living in displaced persons camps and detention facilities in Syria to repatriate their citizens.

**Question.** What do you perceive to be the role of the Syrian Democratic Forces and Iraqi Security Forces in countering ISIS and al Qaeda?

**Answer.** It is my understanding the Department has worked with the SDF for years to help counter terrorist elements in eastern Syria. These partners have historically played a critical role in our efforts to counter ISIS and al Qaeda. If confirmed, I will seek classified and unclassified briefings on the current role of these forces.

*Question.* In your view, should United States troop levels in Syria be tied to the achievement of certain conditions on the ground? If so, what conditions would you factor into your recommendation to the President on future troop levels in Syria?

*Answer.* The deployment of United States troops in any foreign country should always be tied to specific objectives and conditions, and this principle would guide any of my potential recommendations to the Secretary of Defense about troop deployments to any country.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the current United States national security objectives in Iraq?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that current DOD objectives in Iraq support the enduring defeat of ISIS and other violent extremist organizations through a strategic partnership with the Government of Iraq.

*Question.* In September, the United States-Iraq Higher Military Commission announced the transition of the global coalition to defeat ISIS to a bilateral security relationship with the Government of Iraq. However, many of the details of such a transition are still being negotiated with the Iraqi Government.

In your view, what should the guiding principles for DOD's presence in Iraq moving forward? Do you assess that United States Forces should remain in Iraq beyond next September? Why or why not?

*Answer.* The deployment of United States troops in any foreign country should always be reassessed continually based on changing objectives and conditions on the ground. If confirmed, I would support a thorough analysis along these lines prior to making a recommendation to the Secretary.

#### *South Asia*

*Question.* In your opinion, what are United States national security objectives in Afghanistan, and what is your understanding of the current strategy to achieve them?

*Answer.* The United States has a vital national interest in ensuring terrorism that threatens the United States Homeland does not emanate from Afghanistan. It is my understanding that the Department's role in pursuing this objective is executed through Operation ENDURING SENTINEL (OES), the Afghanistan counterterrorism mission. The Defense Intelligence Agency has publicly reported to Congress, via the DOD Inspector General's quarterly report on OES, that ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) maintains the intent and capability to strike outside of its traditional area of operations in South Asia and is probably committed to enabling attacks within the United States.

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, and our Allies to assess whether this strategy is effective and sufficiently resourced.

*Question.* In your view, is the United States properly postured to counter ISIS-Khorasan and al Qaeda and related groups in Afghanistan? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will seek to understand more clearly our posture and support the Secretary on any changes that would be necessary to achieve our national objectives to counter ISIS-Khorasan, al Qaeda and other related groups in Afghanistan.

*Question.* If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to United States relations with Pakistan?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of Defense's global posture review. I understand that this review will reassess whether existing missions and the forces assigned to CENTCOM can meet our needs.

*Question.* In your view, what tools and options are available to the United States to ensure that Pakistan is not used as a sanctuary for militants and violent extremist organizations (VEOs)?

*Answer.* The President has made it clear that his highest priority is to ensure the safety and security of the United States and the American people. If confirmed, I will seek briefings on sanctuaries for militants and violent extremist organizations and the threats they pose to the safety and security of the United States and the American people.

#### UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND (EUCOM)

##### *Implementation of the 2022 NDS*

*Question.* Do you believe the deterrent posture in Europe is sufficient to support the 2022 NDS and deter further Russian aggression in Europe?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing our global posture to assess whether existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

*Question.* In your assessment, are there capability and/or capacity shortfalls in current United States posture that affect the United States ability to carry out the EUCOM Theater Campaign Plan?

Answer. It is my understanding that the EUCOM Commander designs the Theater Campaign Plan based on NDS priorities and the forces made available through the Global Force Management process, and that campaign plan is expected to be executable with those forces. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing our global posture to assess whether existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

*Question.* In your assessment, does the United States have sufficient air and missile defense capability and capacity to defend critical infrastructure in EUCOM? If not, what are the areas of highest risk?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support a global force posture review by the Secretary to reassess whether existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

*Question.* If confirmed, what specific enhancements would you make to other United States capabilities or force posture in Europe to execute the NDS more effectively?

Answer. If confirmed, once a global force posture review is conducted and a new NDS is released, I would recommend that the Secretary direct the Department to align forces with the findings of both reviews and any other relevant direction from the Commander in Chief.

#### *European Deterrence Initiative (EDI)*

*Question.* Since establishment of the EDI in 2014, the NDAA has authorized billions of dollars each year for EDI investments to support stability and security, and to deter Russian aggression.

In your view, has EDI improved United States and allied capability and capacity to deter Russian aggression in the European theater?

Answer. EDI investments since 2014 did not deter Russia's further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. If confirmed, I would support a review of the allocation of resources across the different theaters of conflict and recommend investments that best protect United States interests, deter conflict, and leverage the investments of our Allies to provide for their own defense.

*Question.* Do you believe continued, robust dedicated funding for programs under EDI's five lines of effort is required to support implementation of the NDS in Europe?

Answer. It is my understanding that the EDI's lines of effort—increased presence, exercises and training, enhanced prepositioning, improved infrastructure, and building partner capacity—have bolstered the capabilities and readiness of United States Forces in EUCOM, of NATO Allies, and of regional partners. If confirmed, with the Secretary, I would review the resource requirements necessary to achieve our national security objectives in Europe, with an eye toward increasing European Allied capabilities and leadership.

#### *NATO Alliance*

*Question.* In your view, how important to United States strategic interests is the United States commitment to its obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty, especially Article 5?

Answer. The United States has demonstrated over decades the strength of its commitment to collective security, both in maintaining the world's most lethal military force and in deploying U.S. Forces to maintain deterrence and defeat threats to our collective security.

If confirmed, I would seek to ensure that our NATO Allies demonstrate that their commitment to the Washington Treaty be as strong as ours. While the United States remains committed to NATO, it is time for more European security leadership for the defense of Europe.

*Question.* What do you view as the essential strategic objectives of the NATO Alliance and what do you perceive to be the greatest challenges in meeting those objectives?

Answer. The strategic objectives of the NATO Alliance remain to prevent large-scale conflict in Europe, deter nuclear and non-nuclear aggression, and defeat threats to member states should deterrence fail.

*Question.* NATO has long-held the position that, “as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance.” In your view, do you believe this principle requires the United States to continue to deploy nuclear weapons in NATO countries?

*Answer.* NATO’s status as a nuclear alliance serves to deter conflict and coercion against the alliance. It is my understanding that the United States has maintained nuclear weapons in NATO countries for several decades and is a foundational tenant of the collective nature of the alliance. At a time when the NATO Alliance faces nuclear saber-rattling from Russia, the presence of United States nuclear weapons serves as an important political, strategic, and military link between America and its European Allies.

*Question.* The dual-hatted position of the Commander of EUCOM as NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) allows United States and Allied forces to be highly integrated in Europe. Similar dual-hat responsibilities have been integrated to other senior United States Commanders, including Commander of United States Air Forces Europe and Africa as Commander NATO Allied Air Command (AIRCOM)—and Commander United States Army Europe and Africa as NATO Allied Land Command Commander.

What is your assessment of the benefits of these dual-hatted structures to allied cohesion and integration?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that dual hatting of these roles can be an effective way to integrate disparate organizations and, in some cases, a more efficient use of current resources. If confirmed, with the Secretary, I would review dual-hatted structures to understand if they serve our national security interests.

#### *Russia*

*Question.* In your view, is Russia a threat to the United States and its allies?

*Answer.* There is no question that Putin is willing to use military force to accomplish his geopolitical agenda. The United States should actively deter Russia from acting against vital United States interests.

*Question.* In your view, which EUCOM and NATO activities most deter Russia and mitigate the Russian threat to NATO Allies and partners?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would support a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM, and whether they are sufficient to achieve our national defense strategy goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

*Question.* What aspects of United States and NATO force posture do you assess as having the most significant deterrent effect on Russia?

*Answer.* If confirmed, upon completion of the global force posture review, I would support the Secretary in making recommendations to the President regarding our future deterrent posture in Europe.

*Question.* In your view, what should DOD do to counter Russian malign influence in Europe?

*Answer.* Countering malign influence requires a whole-of-government approach, performed in concert with Allies and partners, that goes beyond conventional military operations. If confirmed, I would support a broader interagency effort to counter malign influence as part of an integrated national level Russia strategy.

#### *Ukraine*

*Question.* In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale, unprovoked, and illegal invasion of Ukraine.

How do you assess the trajectory of the conflict and the role that the Department of Defense should play?

*Answer.* President Trump has made it a priority to end the war as quickly as possible. If confirmed, I will help ensure that DOD supports the President’s negotiating team in pursuing that goal.

*Question.* Do you believe it is important for the United States to continue providing security assistance to Ukraine, including potentially after the conclusion of the war, as a means to help Ukraine deter and defeat Russian aggression?

*Answer.* President Trump has stated that all options, including the provision of additional United States security assistance to Ukraine, are on the table as part of negotiations. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department of Defense is prepared to support the development of a wide range of options for the President and his team to consider as part of negotiations with Russia and Ukraine.

*Question.* What do you see as the role of United States and allied/partner security assistance in building the capabilities and capacity of Ukraine to meet its military requirements to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity in the short, medium, and long-term?

Answer. The President and Secretary of Defense have made it clear to our European NATO Allies that they must take the lead in supporting Ukraine. If confirmed, I would support the Secretary's efforts to press European Allies and partners to increase their security assistance commitments to Ukraine and advance the President's efforts to negotiate a durable peace.

UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND (INDO-PACOM) AND CHINA

*Question.* Is the current United States Force posture in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support the NDS? How would you propose to restructure United States security posture in the Indo-Pacific to counter Chinese aggression, if confirmed? Please explain your answer.

Answer. We must accelerate efforts to enhance United States Force posture and increase operational capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region, given China's accelerated military modernization and the urgent need to reestablish deterrence. If confirmed, I will focus on prioritizing efforts that reestablish deterrence vis-à-vis the PRC.

*Question.* In your assessment, what are the priority investments DOD could make to implement the NDS and improve the military balance in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. If confirmed, I will engage stakeholders across the Department to urgently advance the Administration's goal of reestablishing deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region. This will include working both within the Department and with Congress to determine whether there is appropriate funding for strengthening our posture in the region, and whether the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is sufficient to achieve our aims.

*Question.* Do you believe that continued, dedicated funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is required to support implementation of the NDS in the Indo-Pacific? Please explain your answer.

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress to ensure there is sufficient funding for strengthening our posture and reestablishing deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, I would work with all other relevant stakeholders across the Department to determine whether the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is sufficient to achieve our military goals in the Indo-Pacific region.

*Question.* Congress mandated the establishment of the Joint Force Headquarters at INDOPACOM. What is your view of INDOPACOM's progress in establishing the Joint Force Headquarters? What are the requirements for the Joint Force Headquarters at INDOPACOM to fully execute its function?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with INDOPACOM to review the status and requirements of establishing a Joint Force Headquarters.

*Question.* Can you describe the strategic and operational importance of Guam to executing INDOPACOM's plans and operations in the region? Can you describe the State of military infrastructure and facilities on Guam in the wake of Typhoon Mawar? Do you agree that it is critical for Guam to be reconstructed in a resilient manner so that the United States Military can utilize Guam as a power projection platform in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. Typhoon Mawar, which struck Guam on May 24, 2023, caused extensive damage to military and commercial infrastructure across the island. I understand that the damage affected Andersen Air Force Base, Naval Base Guam, and Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, and now requires significant repairs due to high winds and sustained rainfall.

While not fully apprised of the details, I understand that Congress appropriated \$3.7 billion in supplemental funding for recovery efforts, and that the restoration process is ongoing.

The strategic importance of Guam necessitates a rapid and resilient approach to reconstruction. The island serves as a key power projection platform for the United States Forces in the Indo-Pacific region and hosts significant Air Force and Navy capabilities that support operations across the area. Ensuring the continued functionality of Guam's military assets is vital to maintaining United States influence and deterrence in the region.

If confirmed, I will ensure the reconstruction effort not only restores Guam but also enhances the resilience of DOD operations to future all-hazard risks. This effort could include the use of advanced engineering practices, changes in the generation and distribution of energy, and collaboration with the government of Guam.

*Question.* Do you support the efforts by the United States and Japan to establish a modernized command-and-control structure, to include an improved United States Forces Japan? Do you agree that the Department of Defense should move as fast as possible to establish a new command-and-control structure with Japan, considering its strategic importance as a capable ally in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. Japan is a critical ally in the Indo-Pacific region, and we must work together to strengthen our deterrent posture in the Indo-Pacific region, including through developing joint warfighting capabilities and enhancing interoperability. If confirmed, I will consider the best command-and-control structure for United States Forces in Japan to enable close coordination within our Alliance.

#### *China*

*Question.* The 2022 NDS describes the People's Republic of China (PRC) as "the most comprehensive and serious challenge to United States national security" and states "The PRC seeks to undermine United States 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."

How would you characterize the current United States relationship with China?

Answer. As expressed in the 2018 NDS and 2022 NDS, China is our pacing threat. I agree that China is "the most comprehensive and serious challenge to United States national security." Through a historic military buildup, China has developed capabilities for the specific purpose of being able to exercise military power in the Indo-Pacific region and deny the ability of the United States to project power into the region. If confirmed, I will work with urgency to strengthen our force posture in the Indo-Pacific region to deter PRC aggression.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the current State of United States-China military-to-military relations? What do you believe should be the objectives of United States-China military-to-military dialog? What are the limitations on this kind of dialog?

Answer. United States-China military-to-military engagements are important channels to reduce risk and manage crisis. However, China seizes upon these important dialogs as leverage by offering or canceling senior-level engagements to reward or punish United States behavior in hopes of compelling changes in United States policy.

United States military-to-military dialog with China should focus on clarifying United States policy and correcting China's misperceptions to minimize the risk of unintended escalation in a crisis. These dialogs should be conducted on a selective basis to minimize the chance they are used for political leverage.

*Question.* What do you believe are the objectives of China's steady increase in defense spending and its overall military modernization program? In what technology areas are you most concerned about the erosion of United States advantages?

Answer. The People's Republic of China has for decades made strategic investments in its military capabilities to exercise military power in the Indo-Pacific region and deny the ability of the United States to project power into the region. These investments have been made across all warfare domains and in capabilities symmetrical to those possessed by the United States—air power, aircraft carriers, submarines, missiles, nuclear weapons, and space-based capabilities—as well as asymmetric and next-generation capabilities that they hope will offset our conventional advantages.

If confirmed, I will review relevant classified and unclassified material to fully understand China's military advances.

#### *Taiwan*

*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?

Answer. China's military modernization over the last several decades has been executed with a focus of being capable of taking Taiwan by force if necessary and resisting a potential United States intervention. While it has made some progress, Taiwan still needs to significantly increase its defense spending and prioritize the acquisition of asymmetric capabilities. If confirmed, I will support the provision of critical United States support for Taiwan, particularly assistance that provides asymmetric capabilities that align with a crisis scenario, and pressure Taiwan to urgently increase its defense spending and accelerate reforms.

*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?

Answer. The United States presently maintains its longstanding commitments as outlined in the Taiwan Relations Act, Three Communiqués, and the Six Assurances. If confirmed, I will review our current posture with the Secretary of Defense.

*The Korean Peninsula*

*Question.* What is your assessment of the threat posed by North Korea to regional and global stability?

*Answer.* The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) poses a clear threat to stability on the Korean Peninsula, in the Indo-Pacific region, and across the globe. It remains intensely focused on expanding its illicit nuclear weapons program and improving its ballistic and cruise missile programs, while expanding its malign cyber activities. The DPRK's longstanding chemical and biological weapons capabilities remain a threat. Its recent deployment of combat forces to Russia is also of concern. DPRK capabilities pose a particular threat to the safety and security of United States Allies that host U.S Forces in the region. If confirmed, I will review the latest classified and unclassified briefings on the DPRK threat.

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

*Answer.* Improving missile defense systems, especially for the United States Homeland, will be important to countering the growing DPRK threat. We must also seek to stem the growth of DPRK nuclear and missile arsenals. If confirmed, I will review classified and unclassified materials and advise the Secretary if additional steps need to be taken.

*Question.* Do you agree that landmines have played a critical role in deterring conflict on the Korean Peninsula? Do you support continuing efforts by DOD to modernize related terrain shaping capabilities?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will consult with the Commander of United States Forces Korea and look forward to working with the Committee to address any concerns.

*India*

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you enhance the overall defense relationship between the United States and India? What priorities would you establish?

*Answer.* As President Trump reaffirmed, the United States-India partnership is anchored by a deepening convergence in our strategic interests. Our defense partnership has seen transformative growth through military exercises, defense sales, and strategic dialog. If confirmed, I would continue to bolster our defense partnership with India through operational coordination, information sharing, and defense industrial and technology cooperation.

UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND (NORTHCOM)

*Defense Support to Civil Authorities*

*Question.* Civil authorities may request DOD support for domestic disasters and certain counter-drug operations as well as in managing the consequences of a terrorist event employing a weapon of mass destruction.

In your view, are the procedures by which Federal, State, and Local agencies request DOD support efficient, effective, and timely?

*Answer.* I understand that the procedures by which DOD receives requests from civil authorities, or qualifying entities, allows for appropriate coordination of the request across DOD. DOD should encourage its partners to, where possible, work with DOD in advance of a formal request to ensure clarity of requirements use of appropriate legal authorities.

*Question.* What factors should be considered in determining whether DOD will provide support to a civil authority?

*Answer.* I understand that all requests for Defense Support of Civil Authorities are evaluated based on: Legality (compliance with the law); Lethality (potential use of lethal force by or against DOD forces); Risk (safety of DOD forces); Cost (including the source of funding and the effect on the DOD budget); Appropriateness (whether providing the requested support is in the interest of the Department); and Readiness (the impact on DOD's ability to perform other primary missions).

TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

*Question.* Transnational criminal organizations are engaged in a diversity of illicit activities, including money laundering, human trafficking illicit financial flows, illegal trade in natural resources and wildlife, and trade in illegal drugs, precursors and weapons. These activities reach not only the entirety of the Western Hemisphere, but increasingly throughout the world.

In your assessment, how has the threat to the United States from transnational criminal organizations evolved?

*Answer.* Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are responsible for record levels of violence in Mexico and throughout the region. In recent years, regional



TCOs have expanded their sources of revenue and leveraged new technology such as drones and artificial intelligence, almost certainly to increase their resilience. This has allowed regional TCOs to amass levels of power that directly threaten local citizens, regional governments, and the United States.

I strongly support the Administration's whole of government approach, including robust Department of Defense involvement, to appropriately prioritize the threat posed by TCOs. The recent designation of six cartels and two transnational gangs as Foreign Terrorist Organizations will help counter TCOs by limiting their financial resources.

If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of Defense in prioritizing this threat, consult with Congress, and make a final recommendation for the way ahead. Regardless of the outcome, we must continue to ensure safety of the Homeland.

#### UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND (SOUTHCOM)

*Question.* If confirmed, what recommendations would you make to the President to deter Russian, Cuban, and Chinese influence in the SOUTHCOM AOR?

*Answer.* The influence and activities of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Russia, and Cuba in the SOUTHCOM AOR are undermining United States interests in the region, exploiting critical infrastructure, and threatening hemispheric security. The President and the Secretary have committed to finding ways for the Department of Defense to more actively confront these challenges.

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary and the Commander of SOUTHCOM to review and recommend additional actions that the Secretary may take to support United States national security objectives and defend the Homeland, in coordination with other executive branch departments and agencies and with partner countries.

*Question.* Do you believe these influences threaten hemispheric security and prosperity?

*Answer.* The malign influence of adversaries, including Russia, Cuba, and the People's Republic of China (PRC), in the Western Hemisphere threatens our Homeland. If confirmed, I will ensure DOD is acting on the President's direction to support United States national security objectives and defend the Homeland.

#### *Detainee Treatment and Guantanamo Bay Naval Station*

*Question.* Do you support the standards for detainee treatment specified in Army Field Manual 2-22.3, Human Intelligence Collector Operations, issued in September 2006 and DOD Directive 2310.01E, Department of Defense Detainee Program, dated August 19, 2014, and required by Section 1045 of the NDAA for fiscal year 2016?

*Answer.* Yes. I support the standards for detainee treatment in the Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued in September 2006, and in DOD Directive 2310.01E, DOD Detainee Program, dated August 19, 2014 (Incorporating Change 2, Effective September 18, 2020). Individuals in the custody or control of the United States Government may not be subjected to any interrogation technique or approach, or any treatment related to interrogation, that is not authorized by and listed in the Army Field Manual.

*Question.* What are your views on the continued use of the detention facility at Guantanamo?

*Answer.* Guantanamo Bay is the Department's only long-term detention facility for law of war detainees. If confirmed, I will support the continued operations of the detention facility at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, including the provision of additional detention space for high-priority criminal aliens, unless a suitable replacement can be identified. I will also ensure the continued safe, humane, and legal care and treatment of detainees through Joint Task Force—Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO).

#### *Counternarcotics Activities*

*Question.* DOD serves as lead agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime foreign shipments of drugs flowing toward the United States. On an annual basis, DOD expends nearly \$1 billion to build the counternarcotics capacity of United States Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies and certain foreign governments.

What changes, if any, should be made to DOD's counternarcotics strategy and supporting activities?

*Answer.* The Department needs to ensure it is maximizing its resources and authorities in support of U.S. and foreign law enforcement agencies. The Department should continue to assess how it can best leverage intelligence assets and other capabilities to support these partners' efforts to disrupt and degrade drug-trafficking organizations at their source.

If confirmed, I look forward to receiving classified and unclassified briefings on DOD's counternarcotics strategy and work through any updates that would be needed.

*Question.* Corruption and the absence of the rule of law enable the transnational criminal organizations' narcotics trade that contributes to the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.

In your view, what should be DOD's role in countering the flow of narcotics to nations other than the United States?

Answer. The primary focus should be on the flow of drugs headed to the United States. However, some drug-trafficking organizations have an increasingly global reach. Working with partners to combat drug trafficking can help degrade those drug-trafficking organizations responsible for illicit drug flow into the United States.

*Question.* How, if at all, should U.S. security assistance be scoped to address factors at the root of counternarcotics trafficking, in your opinion?

Answer. We should assist partner nations in developing capabilities that respond to their specific security challenges. Focusing our limited resources on those countries that are major drug-producing or transit countries creates stability in those countries, improves security within their regions, and makes it less likely that drug-trafficking networks can thrive.

#### Venezuela

*Question.* What is your assessment of the current situation in Venezuela and to what degree is the illegitimate Maduro regime dependent on support from external actors like Russia, Cuba, and China?

Answer. I am very concerned about the situation in Venezuela and its potential to create instability across the region. If confirmed, with the Secretary, I will work to ensure the Department is adequately resourcing efforts to deter or defend against any steps Venezuela might take to threaten United States interests, including by supporting United States Government-wide efforts to strengthen United States border security and repatriate illegal migrants.

*Question.* How would you assess Venezuelan relations with China, Cuba, Iran, and Russia vis-à-vis the national interests of the United States?

Answer. United States national security is threatened by the malign activities of Cuba, Iran, the PRC, and Russia, all of whom provide Maduro and his representatives with essential financial and military support. Venezuela's increasing ties with Iran and its reliance on the PRC and Russia for military equipment are deeply concerning. Venezuela regularly sends its personnel to the PRC for training and professional military education. Russia also periodically conducts port calls and naval visits to Venezuela and has flown nuclear-capable bombers to Venezuela.

#### UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE AND UNITED STATES SPACE COMMAND (SPACECOM)

*Question.* The United States is increasingly dependent on space, both economically and militarily. Our great power competitors are making concerted efforts to leap ahead of U.S. technology and impact U.S. freedom of action in the space warfighting domain. The Space Force, within the Department of the Air Force, and a unified Space Command, deal with the contested domain of space, upon which the terrestrial forces of the United States and peer competitors are highly reliant for support.

In your view, does the current NDS accurately assess the strategic environment as it pertains to the domain of space? If confirmed, what changes would you make to the NDS regarding the space domain?

Answer. I have not been briefed on the current classified National Defense Strategy, so I cannot accurately assess the strategic environment as it pertains to space. However, if confirmed, with the Secretary, I will ensure the next NDS prioritizes a secure space environment for civilian, commercial, and international partners as part of a broader U.S. space initiative, while also guaranteeing essential capabilities for our military forces.

*Question.* In your view, what will "great power competition" look like in space and to what extent do you view China's and Russia's activities related to the space domain as a threat or challenge to United States national security interests?

Answer. Space plays a critical role in American security, prosperity, and way of life. The PRC and Russia are investing in space capabilities designed to deny our freedom of action and undermine our strategic advantages. If confirmed, I would ensure that the United States pursues a robust space architecture, with a mix of kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities across all domains to protect and defend the Joint Force from hostile uses of space.

*Question.* Are there other nation-states or actors operating in space that you perceive as a risk to the United States, or as cause for concern? Please explain your answer.

Answer. The space domain continues to become much more contested. In addition to the PRC and Russia, both North Korea and Iran are expanding their space programs and advancing their ballistic missile capabilities. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary's efforts to assure Joint Force access to space and to counter hostile uses of space.

*Question.* How would you assess current DOD readiness to implement the 2022 NDS and U.S. strategic objectives as they relate to the domain of space?

Answer. I have not been briefed on the current classified National Defense Strategy, so I cannot discuss its assessment of space or our current preparedness in that domain. If confirmed, I will make certain that the updated strategy adequately addresses space as a crucial area of military operations.

*Question.* What do you perceive as the most significant threats to our national security space satellites and commercial space systems owned by U.S. companies?

Answer. The PRC and Russia are developing and fielding counterspace weapons aimed at denying United States advantages in space. If confirmed, I will work with the United States Space Force, United States Space Command, and relevant intelligence agencies and commercial partners to understand the threats to our space systems and restore our deterrence.

*Question.* Do you support the development of offensive space systems to counter threats in the space warfighting domain?

Answer. I believe the United States must develop and maintain a range of kinetic, non-kinetic, space-based, and ground-based space capabilities in order to protect and defend the Joint Force against threats in and from all domains.

*Question.* Do you support the development of defensive space systems to counter threats in the space warfighting domain?

Answer. I believe the United States must develop and maintain a range of kinetic, non-kinetic, space-based, and ground-based space capabilities in order to protect and defend the Joint Force against threats in and from all domains.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure that commercial technology is appropriately incorporated into SPACECOM mission execution at acceptable risk levels?

Answer. To remain competitive, the Department must harness the ingenuity, adaptability, and affordability offered by the United States commercial space sector. If confirmed, I will prioritize the review of Department policies to understand where greater collaboration may be achieved.

#### CYBERSECURITY AND UNITED STATES CYBER COMMAND (CYBERCOM)

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

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

Answer. DOD's role in defending the Nation from an attack in cyberspace continues to evolve. I understand that DOD partners with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies to protect against and respond to cyber-attacks against the Nation. The Cyber Mission Force (CMF) is primarily charged with defending forward, conducting defense cyber operations abroad, while DHS and law enforcement are lead for Homeland security with DOD in support.

If confirmed, I would review the status of the Cyber Mission Force and ensure that DOD is postured appropriately, in partnership with DHS and law enforcement, to protect the Nation from cyber-attacks.

While agencies like DHS and FBI focus on civilian infrastructure and criminal investigations, DOD and the CMF's priority should be defending against cyber threats with strategic or military implications. This includes threats to the defense industrial base, nuclear command and control, and the ability to project power globally. Effective national cybersecurity demands close partnership between DOD and other entities, and I am committed to fostering this collaboration if I am confirmed.

*Question.* If confirmed, what role should DOD and the Cyber Mission Force have in combating foreign influence operations, especially those conducted via social media?

Answer. It is my understanding that the published summary of the 2023 Department of Defense Cyber Strategy does not address the role that DOD and the Cyber Mission Force should have in combatting foreign influence operations. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to prioritize DOD's role in defending the Homeland from cyberspace threats.

*Question.* What role should DOD and the Cyber Mission Force have in anticipating, preventing, or responding to attacks on United States commercial entities?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that DOD defends forward by disrupting foreign cyber threats before they can attack United States critical infrastructure; supports requests for assistance from Federal civilian agencies or the private sector through appropriate channels; and enables U.S. commercial entities by providing better insights against foreign malicious cyber threats.

*Question.* Do you believe that the National Security Agency and United States Cyber Command should be dual-hatted? What are the “pros” and “cons” of this arrangement, in your view? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* It is my understanding the question of the “dual hat” leadership arrangement was adjudicated by the previous Secretary of Defense and Director of National Intelligence (DNI), and the arrangement was retained. However, I believe critical relationships such as these should be periodically re-evaluated, and, if confirmed, we will do so.

Proponents of the “dual hat” structure cite operational effectiveness and efficiency, faster decisionmaking, fewer levels of bureaucracy, and lower cost as the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command share many headquarters’ functions. Critics of the “dual hat” cite the concentration of authority in one military commander and the associated challenges of proper oversight. They believe that ending the “dual hat” relationship and the appointment of a civilian director at NSA would increase oversight and would allow the leaders of each to concentrate more on the primary mission of their respective organizations.

If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of Defense in resolving these debates, consult with Congress, and make a final recommendation for the way ahead. Regardless of the outcome, we will continue to ensure mission success of both organizations.

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

It is my understanding that while cyberspace operations are the responsibility of a relatively small number of cyber professionals, cyber risk is a challenge that should be shared across the defense enterprise. DOD pledged to take action to foster a culture of cybersecurity and cyber awareness. DOD also stated that it would establish an expectation that senior military and civilian leaders possess a baseline fluency in cybersecurity issues, and it committed to developing, funding, and implementing technical curricula across various levels of professional military and civilian education, emphasizing General Officer and Senior Executive Service leadership courses.

If confirmed, I would assess the effectiveness of these efforts and seek to remedy weaknesses and build on successes.

*Question.* at characteristics of a cyberattack would constitute an “act of war”? Do you consider the recent breaches in telecommunications infrastructure involving Salt Typhoon to be an “act of war or an espionage operation that falls within de facto norms? In your view, does the nature and scope of this intrusion operation merit a strong and tangible response? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support the President and the Secretary in their assessments of whether a specific cyber-attack by a foreign entity constitutes an act of war. Where a cyber-attack on the United States causes significant physical damage, disrupts critical national infrastructure, targets the civilian population, or is carried out with the clear intention to inflict substantial harm on a Nation’s economic or military capabilities, there would be a strong argument that such an attack could be viewed as an act of war.

If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense and the interagency community of interest to review the extent and ramifications of the Salt Typhoon compromise and potential response options.

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

*Answer.* I am aware of the general nature of the Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon attacks, but I have not been briefed on classified details. To the extent that cyber actors affiliated with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) can compromise United States networks, that is certainly a national security concern and would suggest that United States networks currently lack sufficient cybersecurity safeguards. The United States should possess the ability to protect its critical networks from malicious cyber intrusions. If confirmed, I will work within DOD and with interagency partners to determine how best to work with industry to improve cybersecurity of critical infrastructure and provide necessary government responses to adversary activity, as appropriate.

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

*Answer.* I believe that the Cyber Mission Force could benefit greatly from better access to, and assistance from, top technical talent with experience working at private sector technology companies. I applaud recent experiments by organizations like the Defense Innovation Unit to develop solutions to facilitate placing such individuals in military reserve status, allowing them to put their technical skills and knowledge to work in support of U.S. national security.

*Question.* In your view, are there elements missing from our current approach for offensive and defensive cyber operations that you would recommend we pursue?

*Answer.* I think DOD should do a much better job of enlisting the talent and expertise of patriotic and talented Americans working at private sector technology companies to upgrade and enhance its capabilities and skills. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense to review our Nation's current classified offensive and defensive cyber operations capabilities and will work with Congress on any recommended solutions.

*Question.* How would you characterize our deterrent posture when it comes to cyber effects?

*Answer.* It is my understanding from public reporting that our Cyber Forces have significant capabilities, but the current deterrent posture of the United States with respect to cyber requires further review. I also understand that the 2023 Defense Cyber Strategy emphasizes that military cyber capabilities are most effective when they are combined with other tools of national power. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving classified briefings on this topic to gain a greater understanding of our current cyber deterrent posture and available alternatives to strengthen that posture.

#### UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (SOCOM)

*Question.* Beginning in fiscal year 2017, successive NDAA's have empowered the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD(SOLIC)) to serve as a "service secretary-like" civilian official for special operations forces. Among other reforms, the law defines the administrative chain of command for USSOCOM as running through the ASD(SOLIC) to the Secretary of Defense for issues impacting the readiness and organization of special operations forces.

What is your understanding of the Department's progress in implementing the "service secretary-like" responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC)?

*Answer.* I am aware of the efforts to institutionalize the service secretary-like responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC) and the Secretariat for Special Operations. I understand the criticality of the civilian role in ensuring special operations forces (SOF) are most effectively and efficiently organized, trained, equipped, and resourced. I look forward to conducting a thorough assessment of the progress in implementing this critical civilian-military partnership for the SOF enterprise.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you commit to fully implementing these reforms?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I would fully implement these reforms. I would also ensure these reforms translate into tangible improvements in how we oversee and support special operations forces.

*Question.* In your view, does the ASD(SOLIC) require additional authorities and resources, including additional civilian personnel, to administer oversight of special operations forces?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to conducting a thorough assessment of current authorities and resources to assure this office has the resources, civilian personnel and authorities it needs to provide effective oversight of special operations forces.

#### IRREGULAR WARFARE

*Question.* The Joint Staff's Joint Publication-1 defines "Irregular warfare" as a form of warfare where states and nonState actors campaign to assure or coerce states or other groups through indirect, non-attributable, or asymmetric activities.

What is your understanding of the role and relative importance of irregular warfare in supporting DOD's strategic, operational, and tactical objectives?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that Irregular Warfare (IW) is critical for the Department's mission to deter adversaries and ensure our Nation's security. IW provides flexible options for countering adversaries, combating terrorism, and stabilizing volatile regions. Unlike traditional warfare, IW leverages indirect, asymmetric approaches like working through foreign partners, shaping narratives, and dis-

rupting enemy networks. This is essential in today's security environment as State and non-State actors increasingly employ tactics blending conventional and irregular means. As DOD advances its understanding and the implementation of IW into its core activities, it is imperative that it considers the role functions such as logistics and medical care will play in the accomplishment of its objectives. IW requires a concerted effort across the entire Joint Enterprise—not just Special Operations Forces.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would be your priorities to ensure that DOD is appropriately organized, trained, resourced, and has sufficient authorities to effectively conduct irregular warfare?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that Irregular Warfare provides a cost-effective and asymmetrical way for our Nation to gain advantages throughout the spectrum of competition and in advance of crisis or conflict. I am committed to ensuring that irregular warfare lines of effort receive sufficient resourcing and that our special operations forces continue to be well-trained and equipped.

If confirmed, I will prioritize: 1) establishing and maintaining intelligence dominance, 2) building resiliency, 3) growing our international and inter-organizational alliances and partnerships, 4) suppressing adversary networks, and 5) building agile IW policies and organizations throughout the DOD components.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the use of irregular warfare by China, Russia, Iran, and other adversarial states to undermine the national security interests of the United States and those of our allies and partners?

*Answer.* It is clear from media reports that the People's Republic of China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran challenge us daily, including through "political warfare" by using their "benign" instruments of national power in a warlike fashion to undermine our national security interests. If confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, I will work with Congress to ensure we have the necessary authorities to address these threats and coordinate with other Federal agencies (e.g., DHS, State, Commerce, Treasury) to reverse this paradigm. We will counter our adversaries' irregular warfare efforts and hold them accountable.

#### *Counterterrorism*

*Question.* What is your assessment of the threat to United States interests posed by al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and their affiliates and adherents? Which group, in your view, presents the greatest threat to the United States?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that despite significant and continuous United States efforts to degrade al Qaeda and the Islamic State, both continue to pose a threat to United States interests around the globe. Though the significant degradation of the Islamic State appears to indicate that al Qaeda currently possesses a greater capability to threaten United States interests, the United States must carefully monitor the impact of the fall of the Assad regime in Syria on the Islamic State's ability to reconstitute.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department does not lose sight of the threats posed by either group or their affiliates and adherents, including their ability to threaten the United States Homeland.

*Question.* If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to the U.S. counterterrorism strategy and DOD's role in supporting it? What metrics would you apply to measure the effectiveness of the strategy?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of Defense in countering terrorism. Countering terrorism is a complex challenge that requires a whole-of-government approach to be effective, and DOD has a key role to play in that fight. We rely on the intelligence community to maintain awareness of the terrorist threats facing the United States. I believe that focusing on countering direct threats to the United States and Americans abroad, while maintaining a capability to develop indications and warnings of how the threat is evolving so that we aren't caught off guard in the future, will effectively balance our resource commitment to this important effort.

#### MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

*Question.* What is your assessment of DOD's ability to conduct effective military operations in the information environment to defend U.S. interests against malign influence activities carried out by State and non-State actors?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that DOD has made recent progress in improving the effectiveness of its operations in the information environment and defending against malign influence, though more work needs to be done. DOD's Strategy for Operations in the Environment in 2023 was an important first step.

I also understand that there are important efforts underway to fully implement oversight and policy authorities provided to the Secretary of Defense's designated

Principal Information Operations Advisor (PIOA) in 10 U.S.C. 397. These efforts include strengthening the role of the PIOA-chaired Strategic Information Oversight Board so that the Department can better assess and improve how it is postured to shape the information environment to gain and maintain the U.S. military advantage. Department-level integration and civilian oversight are critical to improving DOD's operations in the information environment.

If confirmed, I will assess opportunities to use the role of Principal Information Operations Advisor to further improve DOD's effectiveness in the information environment and our ability to defend against malign influence.

*Question.* Does DOD have sufficient authorities and resources to conduct these operations effectively? If not, what additional authorities and resources would you request, if confirmed?

Answer. I appreciate the support from Congress to ensure DOD maintains the appropriate authorities and resources for operations in the information environment.

If confirmed, I will review DOD's current authorities and resources to determine if any changes are necessary.

*Question.* The DOD's organizational structure and approach to Operations in the Information Environment (OIE) has not changed significantly in nearly 25 years, and was largely based on legacy psychological warfare approaches that go back to the cold war. Do you foresee any need to revisit the organization, doctrine, training and tools for OIE to integrate the lessons we are seeing from our adversaries?

Answer. The information environment has changed considerably in the last 25 years. Technological developments have lowered the barrier for entry, easing the ability of adversary State and non-State actors to spread propaganda to support their ends.

If confirmed, I will review DOD's current organization, doctrine, training and tools to determine if any changes are necessary.

*Question.* In your view, are DOD approaches for tools and training in OIE keeping pace with what we are seeing from our adversaries, in particular with regards to new tools like generative artificial intelligence, use of publicly available or commercially available data, and sentiment analysis tools?

Answer. The employment of emerging technology is an essential area of focus. I understand that DOD has struggled to fully leverage the rapidly developing commercial technology that is driving the evolution of our global information environment.

If confirmed, I will review DOD's current use of technology in the information environment, determine what changes are necessary, and explore ways to accelerate the adoption of tools and training to support the DOD information advantage.

*Question.* In your experience, where do you see dependencies in DOD's approach to OIE on interagency partners, and do you have suggestions for how to strengthen those relationships and capabilities?

Answer. The global information environment affects everyone. DOD must work with interagency partners when and where appropriate to ensure synchronization and coordination of U.S. messaging.

If confirmed, I will review DOD's current approach to working with interagency partners to ensure they are as productive as possible.

#### UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND

##### *Nuclear Policy*

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

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

Answer. I agree with Secretary Hegseth's assessment that China, Russia, and North Korea have significantly expanded and modernized their nuclear force capabilities. These improvements, which include advances in warheads, delivery systems, and command and control systems, pose an increasing threat to the United States and its Allies.

China is expanding its nuclear arsenal at extraordinary speed. For example, China has rapidly increased its total number of nuclear warheads, developed new missile silos for solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), expanded the dual-capable DF-26 intermediate range ballistic missile force, and refitted Type 094 ballistic missile submarines with the longer-range JL-3 submarine-launched bal-

listic missile. Russia has developed new advanced nuclear weapons like the Sarmat ICBM, Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle, and Kinzhal hypersonic missile. North Korea is expanding its nuclear stockpile and improving miniaturization of warheads and road mobile launch systems.

Our adversaries continue to test their delivery systems and make improvements. Russia and North Korea have announced modification of their nuclear warfighting doctrines. This change by the Russians, combined with improved nuclear force capabilities has increased the potential for employment of tactical nuclear weapons in support of conventional operations in Ukraine.

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

Answer. Nuclear deterrence is a central and critical foundation of our Nation's strategy, and modernization of nuclear forces is a top priority to counter near-peer nuclear states, and rogue regimes who seek to expand their influence through the development of nuclear capabilities.

*Question.* Do you agree that a triad of land, air, and sea based nuclear delivery platforms is consistent with an effective deterrent posture in an era of great power competition with Russia and China?

Answer. The three legs of the triad together provide mutually supporting attributes which best maintain strategic stability. It is critical to maintain and field a safe, secure, and effective nuclear triad.

*Question.* Do you believe the current program of record is sufficient to support the full modernization of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, including delivery systems, weapons, command and control systems, and infrastructure?

Answer. It is critical to maintain and modernize all three legs of the triad—ICBMs, submarines, and bombers.

*Question.* If confirmed, I will support the Secretary's review of the programs of record to ensure it is sufficient to meet the deterrence challenges of the future and mitigate risks during the transition from legacy to modernized systems. As needed, I will direct appropriate adjustments to the programs and make recommendations to the President and the Secretary.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you commit to support full funding for efforts to comprehensively modernize the Nation's nuclear deterrent forces and accelerate programs wherever possible?

Answer. I agree nuclear deterrence should remain the top priority of DOD. Maintaining full funding for a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent is much less expensive than fighting a war that we are unable to deter.

If confirmed, I look forward to supporting the Secretary of Defense in any review of the programs of record to ensure they are sufficient to support full modernization of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, direct appropriate adjustments to the programs, and make recommendations to the President.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure that DOD and the National Nuclear Security Administration continue the investments and senior leader attention needed to modernize our nuclear deterrent and avoid age-driven unilateral disarmament?

Answer. As Secretary Hegseth said, the partnership with NNSA is one of DOD's highest priorities. If confirmed, I look forward to working with them to accelerate production to provide critical nuclear weapons and components to our modernized nuclear delivery platforms and forces, including Columbia Class Submarines, B-21 bombers, and Sentinel ICBMs.

*Question.* The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review supported the development of the submarine launched cruise missile for regional deterrence stating that "in the near-term, the United States will modify a small number of existing SLBM warheads to provide a low-yield option, and in the longer term, pursue a modern nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM)." Congress has supported the authorization and funding associated with this endeavor.

If confirmed, will you support the recommendation of the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review?

Answer. I understand that DOD and the Navy are complying with the FY24 NDAA requirement to establish and develop a Sea-Launched Nuclear Capable Cruise Missile (SLCM-N) program. If confirmed, I will review the SLCM-N program, and will work with others in the Department, Congress, and our industry partners to implement the law and ensure we have a program that delivers the capabilities needed to maintain credible deterrence in the evolving security environment.



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

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

Do you support the recapitalization of the NNSA's capabilities to design, manufacture, and sustain an effective nuclear weapons stockpile?

*Answer.* I support the recapitalization and revitalization of NNSA infrastructure for improved and accelerated design, manufacture, and sustainment of the nuclear weapons stockpile to move faster and be more responsive to warfighter and strategic requirements. I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment, the Deputy Secretary of Energy, the NNSA Administrator, the Director of the Office of Management & Budget, and other agency stakeholders to strike the right balance of cost, schedule, and performance for our nuclear modernization programs among the full range of our defense investments.

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

*Answer.* Yes. The UK is a vital partner and our closest collaborator in nuclear security and deterrence.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the role of the Deputy Secretary of Defense relative to the NWC's and NNSA's responsibility for maintaining the Nation's nuclear weapons stockpile? How would you execute your duties vis-à-vis this role, if confirmed?

*Answer.* The Deputy Secretary of Defense supports the Secretary of Defense to deliver warfighter weapons requirements through the NWC to the NNSA, which is resourced and responsible for modernizing and maintaining the safe, secure, and reliable nuclear stockpile. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Hegseth, the Secretary of Energy, and the NNSA Administrator to meet the Nation's requirements.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to working with the Deputy Secretary of Energy, the Administrator of the NNSA, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to ensure that annual budgets adequately support the modernization and sustainment of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile?

*Answer.* Nuclear deterrence is the top priority for DOD. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Deputy Secretary of Energy, the Administrator of the NNSA, the Director of the Office of Management & Budget, and other agency stakeholders to support the mission.

*Arms Control*

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

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

*Answer.* The United States should pursue arms control when it is in U.S. interests to do so. Specifically, we should seek arms control agreements that enhance U.S. security and are verifiable. Currently neither PRC nor most Russian nuclear forces are constrained in any meaningful way by arms control agreements. Both the PRC and Russia have rebuffed United States efforts to engage in meaningful risk reduction talks since 2020. The most effective thing the Department of Defense can do to prepare itself for any future dialog on arms control is to build a modern nuclear triad that deters conflict and assures United States partners and Allies.

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

*Answer.* I do not believe we should limit United States options in any future negotiation with Russia or the PRC by prematurely imposing limitations, but instead remain open to all negotiable conditions that maximize our ability to protect United States interests and defend the Nation, deter our adversaries, and assure our Allies and partners.

*Missile Defense*

*Question.* Rapidly growing Russian, Chinese, North Korean, and Iranian missile arsenals are outpacing United States' capabilities for defeating these threats to the Homeland, allies, and United States Forces abroad.

If confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, what would be your priorities for U.S. missile defense capabilities for the Homeland?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be to deliver on the President's Executive Order 14186 issued on January 27 calling for the development and fielding of a next generation missile defense shield for America.

#### COOPERATIVE THREAT REDUCTION (CTR) PROGRAM

*Question.* The CTR Program historically focused on accounting for, securing, and eliminating cold war era weapons of mass destruction and materials in the states of the former Soviet Union. As part of its expansion to other countries, the CTR Program includes biological weapons and capabilities as well as biological surveillance and early warning and encouraging the development of capabilities to reduce proliferation threats.

In your view, how could coordination of the CTR Program across U.S. Government agencies that engage in threat reduction efforts (i.e., the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, and the State Department) be improved?

Answer. The DOD CTR Program, like other programs that support partner capabilities, needs a careful and thorough review and a cost-benefit analysis to ensure its activities fully support its core counter weapons of mass destruction (WMD) mission. Like all DOD programs, the CTR Program should directly contribute to a lethal and effective fighting force and advance the Nation's priorities as established in the National Defense Strategy.

If confirmed, I will make clear my expectation—across the Department and for all programs, including the DOD CTR Program—that we need to work to maintain and improve coordination across the Federal Government. Regular engagement is invaluable to align resources and ensure efficiency.

#### AIR FORCE ISSUES

*Question.* It has been stated the Air Force is too small and too old to do what the Nation asks of it.

Do you agree with this statement?

Answer. The Air Force fleet is the oldest and smallest in the history of the Air Force, and my understanding is that the analysis indicates that to counter the pacing threat we need to invest in a family of medium-and long-range penetrating airframes coupled with modern munitions, human-machine teaming, and a hardened warfighting network. I believe the Air Force has made meaningful steps in that direction, but while there has been progress toward modernizing the force, the tension between near term readiness and readiness for the future fight remains a challenge due to fiscal realities.

Additionally, I do believe the requirements of the Air Force exceed its capacity to fulfill them. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Department of the Air Force (DAF) leadership and Congress to fully understand and address these challenges.

*Question.* If confirmed, where do you see the greatest risk in capability and capacity for the Air Force and what actions would you take or direct to mitigate those risks?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Department of Air Force (DAF) accepted risk in modernization accounts to fund minimum-essential readiness in foundational accounts. Meanwhile, our strategic competitors are fielding their advanced platforms and developing systems that target our vulnerabilities. If confirmed, I commit to working with Congress to address DAF risks and deter our most consequential competitors.

*Question.* The Air Force is on record as needing to purchase a minimum of 72 fighter aircraft per year to maintain requisite force structure. In your opinion, what is the optimum mix of 4th and 5th generation aircraft required to meet the threat outlined in the 2022 NDS?

Answer. I believe our fighter inventory must increase and, consequently, the Air Force needs a mix of 4th and 5th generation aircraft to balance capability and affordability. I have not received any classified briefings on this subject, but, if confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff, combatant commands and the Air Force to assess the current capability and underlying combat air requirements.

*Question.* What are your views on continuing development and fielding of the Next Generation Air Dominance program, the Air Force's sixth generation fighter?

Answer. I have not received classified briefings on this subject, but, if confirmed, I look forward to doing a full review of the details and status of the NGAD program, to include the findings of the Air Force's recent analysis of the mission relevance of the NGAD.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Department leadership and Congress to develop a balanced and affordable plan to grow the tactical fighter aircraft fleet that is prepared to win against a peer adversary.

*Question.* The follow-on modernization of the F-35 is slated to bring key warfighting capabilities to the Air Force, but the schedule and budget of this modernization program remain in flux.

Are you confident in the affordability and executability of the Department's plan for Block 4 Continuous Capability Development and Delivery (C2D2)?

Answer. It is my understanding the F-35 Program requires continued investment in Block 4 modernization to retain a tactical advantage against key competitors and to enable Combatant Commanders to achieve success in a future high-end fight.

If confirmed, I will review the details and status of F-35 modernization, including the acquisition strategy for Block 4, to achieve a balance of cost and timely delivery of required capabilities to the warfighter.

*Question.* Given the importance of extending the range of U.S. aircraft, what do you believe to be the overall tanker requirement for the Air Force and at what rate and on what schedule must the Air Force procure KC-46 to be able to meet that requirement?

Answer. The tanker fleet is a core element of our overall military strength. It is essential to U.S. power projection, Homeland Defense, strategic deterrence, global strike, rapid global mobility, and coordinated Joint Force and coalition efforts. I recognize the Department of the Air Force needs a total aircraft inventory that gives them the needed flexibility to manage tanker resources as dictated by the environment while investing in the necessary modernization to meet warfighting demands in the future. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Joint Staff, the Air Force, and Congress to review tanker fleet requirements and procurement strategy to maintain a competitive edge in a highly contested environment.

*Question.* Do you agree with the Air Force approach of divesting aircraft-based command and control and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities now and shifting reliance to space-based capabilities in the future? Please explain your answer.

Answer. It is my understanding that the Department of the Air Force (DAF) is divesting components of its airborne command and control (C2) and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) fleets to transition to more advanced and survivable capabilities in both domains. When combined, air and space-based capabilities provide a flexible and complimentary force to defend America and prevail in any conflict. If confirmed, I look forward to better assessing the capabilities needed in both the air and space domains.

#### ARMY ISSUES

##### *Army Modernization Priorities*

*Question.* The Army is in the midst of a major modernization period focusing on six modernization priorities: long range precision fires, next generation combat vehicle, future vertical lift, air and missile defense, network and soldier lethality. The Army is also establishing a path for more continuous upgrades to rapidly evolving technologies under its Transformation in Contact initiative.

In your view, what are the most critical Army modernization priorities, particularly in the context of countering multiple simultaneous global threats?

Answer. Building peace through strength will require that the Army modernize to address the threats facing our Nation today and into the future. I understand that the Army's Transformation in Contact initiative prioritizes efforts such as Next Generation Command and Control and Long-Range Precision Fires. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Army, and all the Services, to guarantee that we deliver the American people a warfighting force which will create peace through strength.

*Question.* How would you evaluate the importance of Army efforts in the Indo-Pacific, including the Army's activation of Multi-Domain Task Forces, to conduct cross-domain operations in support of the Joint Force?

Answer. Achieving peace through strength will require DOD to provide the right mix of capabilities in the Indo-Pacific and across the globe. I understand that the Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces bring critical cross-domain capabilities to the Force. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Army, and all the Services, to guarantee that we deliver the American people a warfighting force which will create peace through strength.

##### *Army Preparedness for the Pacific*

*Question.* Army prepositioned stocks remain a cornerstone of the Army ability to project power. Army leaders have publicly supported expanding land-based equip-

ment packages in the Indo-Pacific region to reduce transit times and avoid logistical delays.

What are your thoughts of the value of land-basing versus maintaining stocks afloat?

Answer. While I am outside the Department, I do not have the information to fully evaluate the right mix of afloat and land-based stocks. However, I understand that, in many cases, land-based equipment may be cheaper to maintain, more responsive to the point of need and less vulnerable to peer and near-peer adversaries than equipment sets afloat. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Army, and all the Services, to guarantee that we deliver the American people a warfighting force which will create peace through strength.

*Question.* What additional capabilities should be prepositioned in INDOPACOM?

Answer. While I am outside the Department, I do not have sufficient information to identify additional capabilities which must be prepositioned in INDOPACOM. However, if confirmed, I will commit to working with the Army, and all the Services, to make sure that America has the right capabilities to deliver peace through strength.

*Question.* Army watercraft are a discreet but important tool to facilitate contested operations in a maritime environment. A decision in 2018 and since reversed resulted in significant delay in maintaining and modernizing the Army's watercraft fleet.

How would you prioritize capabilities like Army watercraft readiness, that are critical to intratheater logistics in a contested environment?

Answer. The Army is critical to providing the intratheater logistics that will be necessary to win in a contested environment. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Army, and all the Services, to prioritize the efforts which will guarantee intratheater mobility and achieve peace through strength.

#### *Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD)*

*Question.* In your view, are the roles and responsibilities for Army Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) appropriately assigned across the defense services and agencies?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) system involves stakeholders across the Department of Defense. Army IAMD is a critical part of our defense approach, and President Trump recognizes the importance of IAMD through his Iron Dome for America Executive Order. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense and across the Department to insure IAMD responsibilities are assigned in a manner that best supports mission success.

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

Answer. It is my understanding the IAMD system is a complex architecture that involves collaboration with other defense agencies and services, which contribute their own sensors and data into the overall system. While I am outside the Department, I do not have access to the information necessary to fully evaluate the whole system but, if confirmed, I will work with all stakeholders to fully integrate our capabilities and to insure execution of President Trump's Executive Order on Iron Dome for America.

*Question.* The Army serves as the Department's executive agent for the Joint Counter Small Unmanned Aerial Systems Office (JCSO), and has made progress demonstrating, testing, and advancing effective counter small unmanned aerial systems (C-sUAS) capabilities for the Joint Force.

If confirmed, would you support continuation of the JCSO effort? How would you prioritize and focus efforts across DOD to counter larger UAS?

Answer. Rebuilding lethality requires effective counter small unmanned aerial systems capabilities. While I am outside the Department, I do not have sufficient information to evaluate the JCSO and its place in a cross-Department effort. If confirmed, I will work with Department leaders, and with Congress, to ensure the warfighters have the necessary tools and technologies to counter UAS and protect our assets at home and abroad.

#### NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ISSUES

##### *Recapitalizing the Fleet*

*Question.* Despite the Navy's stated requirement for at least 381 ships, it is currently operating with approximately 296 battle force ships.

Do you consider the Fiscal Year 2025 shipbuilding plan, which reaches the policy goal of 355 ships only in 2038, to be acceptable? How would you accelerate the number of ships delivered to the United States Navy?

Answer. I have read the Navy's FY25 shipbuilding plan, which outlines its perspective on the future battle force with a timeline to achieve a 355 ship Navy in 2038 given current workforce and industrial base capability and capacity. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Navy, USD(A&S), Congress, and industry to continue ongoing efforts directed on improving productivity and workforce development, as well as developing new initiatives focused on the shipbuilding supply chain, that could open windows of opportunity to accelerate shipbuilding profiles.

*Question.* The Navy's fiscal year 2025 shipbuilding plan will significantly reduce the number of battle force ships and vertical launch systems over the course of the next 5 years.

How would you mitigate the impacts of this reduced capacity, or how would you plan to retain or grow the Navy's capacity?

Answer. I understand the number of the Navy's vertical launch systems is expected to decrease based on the FY25 shipbuilding plan. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Navy to better understand current fleet capabilities, and how extensions of DDG 51 FLT I ships and the delivery of DDG 51 FLT III ships and SSNs with Vertical Payload Modules, will meet the Navy's needs.

#### *Nuclear Submarines*

*Question.* Navy leaders have testified that the Columbia-class program, the Department of the Navy's top acquisition priority, will require significant investment and will result in equivalent reductions of other programs in the Navy budget, if a higher Navy topline or outside funding is not provided.

What would you do to ensure the Navy and industry reaches the two Virginia-class and one Columbia-class submarine goal per year requirement by 2028 while keeping other Navy priorities on track?

Answer. A robust shipbuilding industrial base is critical to producing the ships our Navy and Nation requires. If confirmed, I will work closely with Navy and industry to prioritize efficient investment in the shipbuilding industrial base while minimizing impacts to other Navy priorities. This will include developing the skilled workforce and updating the critical infrastructure necessary to achieve the two Virginia-class and one Columbia-class per year construction goal. Additionally, I will work with the Navy and USD(A&S) to refine acquisition and contract strategies, ensuring that these strategies incentivize our industry partners to deliver these vessels on time and at budget.

#### *Hybrid Fleet*

*Question.* In Navigation Plan 2024, the Chief of Naval Operations made "scale robotic and autonomous systems to integrate more platforms at speed" a top priority.

Do you support the transition to a hybrid fleet of manned and unmanned vessels, and if so, what would you do to achieve a successful transition?

Answer. Yes. I support the transition to a hybrid fleet of manned and unmanned vessels. This evolution is crucial for increasing our capacity and augmenting our operational forces with new/novel technologies that will provide both lethal and non-lethal capabilities. If confirmed, I will prioritize our efforts across our Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) and advocate for changes that will capitalize on the pace of which technology is changing while ensuring robust cybersecurity measures to safeguard all of our capabilities.

If confirmed, I will advocate for the creation of a Hybrid ecosystem alongside our Allies and partners in order to test our doctrine and sustainment requirements necessary to ensure seamless integration and maximize "scaling" of maritime capability. Additionally, I would advocate for interoperability standards and foster collaboration with industry. By focusing on these areas, we can create a resilient and adaptive naval force capable of meeting future challenges effectively.

#### *Military Sealift Command*

*Question.* DOD announced that it will retire 17 logistics and support vessels due to a lack of civilian mariners.

What should DOD and the Navy do to increase the availability of civilian mariners? In your view, would there be opportunities to work with other agencies to ensure that DOD can meet its logistical requirements?

Answer. I understand that DOD and the Navy are working with the Military Sealift Command to expand outreach efforts to improve the civilian mariner talent pipeline. In my opinion, engagements with State maritime academies will likely

strengthen partnerships that will increase the number of maritime academy graduates into the civilian mariner population. Additionally, collaboration with the maritime industry to identify talent management best practices and efforts to expand compensation incentives may improve the retention of civilian mariners.

#### *Naval Aviation*

*Question.* What are your views on the current status of the naval aviation enterprise?

*Answer.* In my opinion, the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE) faces opportunities and challenges as it seeks to innovate, adapt to new strategic priorities, and navigate fiscal constraints. Naval aviation is central to modern naval operations and U.S. Navy's integrated contributions to U.S. Joint war fighting capability. Naval aviation continues to evolve, though, as it seeks to counter peer threats like China, which seeks to directly confront the advantage our Navy and naval aviation provide by fielding advanced anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities.

Emphasizing and investing in long-range precision strike, coordinated, flexible responses, and ensuring carrier air wings remain lethal and effective in contested environments will maintain the Navy's strategic dominance across the globe. To face challenges in aircraft readiness, it is imperative that the Navy continue to balance a sustainable, readiness-focused fleet with the procurement of newer platforms. Additionally, retaining skilled aviators and maintainers amid high operational tempos and resourcing challenges, with effective training and readiness, must remain a focus.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you ensure that the Navy's fighter fleet is able to modernize to meet the Chinese threat?

*Answer.* The future carrier air wing (CVW) must harness a revitalized aviation/ weapons industrial base to be more lethal, networked, and autonomous in its role to provide critical battlespace awareness, sea control, long-ranged fires, and air superiority for the Joint Force. We need to ensure that it integrates advanced sensors, can employ advanced weapons capabilities, and has the ability to operate in increasingly contested environments.

It is my understanding that the Navy is coordinating with U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Air Force in tri-service development of collaborative combat aircraft—or "CCA"—that will be additive unmanned and autonomous capability to our manned fighter fleet, increasing the mass and complexity that our adversaries will face if they choose to confront us in combat.

If confirmed, I will work with the OSD staff, Joint Staff, combatant commands, and Navy to assess relevant threats and review combat capabilities to ensure they meet operational needs.

#### *Marine Corps Modernization*

*Question.* The Marine Corps modernization efforts center on a reorientation toward amphibious warfare and improved integration with the naval force. Capability development and experimentation focus on contested maritime operations.

What is your understanding of the Force Design plans of the Marine Corps?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the Marine Corps Force Design is an overarching plan to deter and win against the pacing threat through innovative formations, equipment, and operating concepts. I understand the Marine Corps has made significant progress modernizing over the past four and a half years, and this ongoing modernization effort was self-funded by the Marine Corps by making hard choices to divest legacy systems and invest in systems which provide an asymmetric advantage.

*Question.* If confirmed, what changes to the Marine Corps or to support from the joint forces would you recommend?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the Marine Corps has undergone transformational change over the last 5 years, optimizing force structure while remaining expeditionary, efficient, and lethal. The relevance of Marine Corps formations against the pacing challenge remains a measure of effectiveness, and their modernization efforts ensure the Commandant continues to provide ready forces that meet Combatant Commander requirements.

If confirmed, I will work with the OSD staff, Joint Staff, combatant commands, and Department of Navy leadership to ensure the Marine Corps can sustain power projection while maintaining the flexibility to respond to evolving threats.

*Question.* The Marine Corps also serves as one of the Nation's primary reaction forces, particularly in response to noncombatant evacuation operations and natural disasters.

Are you comfortable with the Marine Corps' current preparedness to execute these missions? Please explain your answer.

Answer. I understand the Marine Corps maintains a high State of readiness for non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO) and disaster relief missions, emphasizing the critical role of logistics. General Eric M. Smith, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, has highlighted the importance of a continuous presence of ARG/MEUs sortieing forward from both United States coasts and Japan. This strategic positioning ensures rapid response capabilities, as crises requiring evacuations or immediate assistance can arise unpredictably. The Marine Corps commitment to balancing crisis response with modernization efforts further enhances its logistical preparedness.

By integrating naval mobility and maintaining forward-deployed units, the Marine Corps ensures it can effectively support a range of missions, from humanitarian assistance to full-scale combat operations. Overall, the Marine Corps' forward posture and naval integration capabilities enable it to respond swiftly and effectively to a range of military operations.

#### REFORM OF DOD BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

##### *Digital Modernization*

*Question.* The Department expends significant resources on information technology and related services, yet remains highly reliant on slow legacy systems and enterprise infrastructure, and on personnel intensive workarounds for critical operating functions such as personnel, financial management, logistics, and acquisition. Not surprisingly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, DOD struggled to enable the total force to work remotely in a persistent and secure fashion, incurring health and safety risks that should not have been necessary had the Department not repeatedly deferred investments in digital modernization initiatives.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to prioritize and resource digital modernization initiatives such as secure enterprise-wide cloud, teamwork, and collaboration tools, as well as senior leader decision support initiatives like advanced analytic capabilities (ADVANA)?

Answer. Digital modernization is critical to ensure our warfighters maintain decision advantage, to improve workforce productivity, and to spend tax dollars responsibly as demonstrated by a clean Department-wide audit. If confirmed, I will make digital transformation a priority.

To drive progress on these issues, I will leverage the authorities and resources of the Department, including those of the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Officer and the Chief Information Officer, to accelerate the appropriate use of industry software and data management best practices to reduce technical debt and meet the Department's priorities in command and control, enterprise analytics, financial management, and workforce productivity. From my time in the private sector, I have seen such best practices for digital transformation and, if confirmed, will be committed to applying these practices in the Department to meet our priority objectives.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure a broader use of modern management tools and systems that you would seek to implement at the Department of Defense, if confirmed?

Answer. The Department's adoption of modern management tools and systems is essential to meet the President's priorities for a clean Department-wide audit, greater management efficiency, and more lethal warfighting effects. If confirmed, I would accelerate data-driven decisionmaking and outcome-based performance management in DOD, and mandate the enhancement, interoperability, and broader use of tools, like the Advancing Analytics (Advana) enterprise data and analytics platform, to inform senior leader decisionmaking.

If confirmed, I would also use best of breed commercial technologies, implement best practices for software development, and mandate data sharing to ensure DOD systems can share data with those who require its insights. In addition, I would ensure DOD is fully capitalizing on the benefits of artificial intelligence to advance the Department's priorities, such as the audit. Finally, if confirmed, I would drive performance targets and monitor progress through the Department's Strategic Management Plan (SMP), ensuring that our work here is transparent to our Nation's taxpayers.

##### *Management reform*

*Question.* The Department of Defense is one of the most complex organizations in the Federal Government. To help with oversight and management, Congress has mandated tools including the Strategic Management Plan and the defense management framework codified in title 10, U.S. Code, 125a. In addition, the FY2025

NDA formally established the position of the Performance Improvement Officer to help the Department with forward-looking business transformation efforts.

Based on your experience, how do you recommend using these tools to improve management discipline in the Department to gain greater efficiency and effectiveness from DOD initiatives?

Answer. I have recognized throughout my decades of experience in the private sector that management discipline is crucial for improving a business's efficiency and effectiveness. This is done by establishing clear expectations and requirements, enforcing standards, and promoting accountability.

If confirmed, I welcome the opportunity to leverage the tools Congress provided to cut unnecessary bureaucracy and streamline processes, which will ultimately make the military stronger and more lethal.

*Question.* Do you have recommendations for effectively managing DOD operations?

Answer. I understand the U.S. Congress has provided the Department with tools to improve DOD's management discipline in and across the defense enterprise (including as recently as December 2024). If confirmed, I look forward to understanding and applying all available tools to improve DOD's management discipline, including through the responsibilities given to the DOD Performance Improvement Officer (PIO).

Transparency and accountability are essential to improve management discipline in the Department, or anywhere else. These will be priorities, if confirmed. In my experience, data-informed analytics can improve the alignment of strategy to resources; and help track critical resource execution in large organizations. I will look for ways to drive improved performance through processes, resource execution, and accountability. We owe our warfighters efficient and effective resource alignment for key programs and results-driven processes.

*Question.* DOD must respond to warfighting needs and unexpected contingency operations. A policy that works well in a peacetime environment may be ill-suited to the exigencies of warfighting.

Based on your experience, how do you consider and evaluate the tradeoffs between efficiency and warfighting necessity, and how do you anticipate integrating that into DOD decisionmaking processes?

Answer. The Secretary has said the ultimate test for everything in the Department of Defense is lethality. If confirmed, my priority will be to meet the President's vision and Secretary's direction to ensure we deliver the American people a warfighting force which will create peace through strength. Increased efficiency and accountability are core elements to make sure visions are achieved.

*Question.* What role do you see the Deputy's Management Action Group (DMAG) in supporting your management processes? Do you have any recommendations for how the DMAG can be leveraged differently than how it has been used in the past?

Answer. My view is that the Department can and should produce both efficiency and necessary warfighting capabilities. Warfighting effectiveness evaluations will be critical to understanding how much capability to pursue. The priority level of a mission and the level of threat to that mission will also be important factors in tradeoff decisions. If confirmed, I will require that decisionmaking processes appropriately consider risk and do so with strong analytic foundations.

If confirmed, I intend to use any management forum to drive outcomes for the country and to ensure that I have a full understanding of the risks that should be considered in any decision brought to the forum, and I look forward to using such forums to rapidly advance DOD's warfighting effectiveness and make its business processes more efficient.

#### DOD AUDITABILITY

*Question.* Since 1995, DOD's financial management has been on the Government Accountability Office's High-Risk List, identified as vulnerable to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. Over the past several years, DOD undertook a department-wide financial audit, despite not being audit-ready, and has made significant progress toward auditability. The Department is now targeting December 31, 2028 to achieve an unmodified or clean opinion.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to maintain the significant momentum achieved in auditability over the past several years at the Department of Defense?

Answer. The December 31, 2028, clean audit opinion deadline, set in law, means DOD has less than four fiscal years remaining to earn an unmodified opinion. Secretary Hegseth has already deemed audit as a priority. If confirmed, one of my first actions will be to ensure existing audit roadmaps and remediation priorities still make sense toward achieving accelerated audit progress. Whether they are suffi-



cient or need to be adjusted, if confirmed, I would commit myself to rigorous oversight of those efforts to drive significant and continuous progress to ensure everyone who spends a dollar in DOD contributes to our clean audit requirement. All resource owners, not just the financial management community, must be held accountable for swift, meaningful progress toward this goal.

*Question.* If confirmed, what specific actions would you take or direct to achieve better outcomes than have past initiatives intended to improve DOD auditability?

*Answer.* In line with what the Government Accountability Office (GAO), Congress, and other auditors have observed, I believe much of DOD's audit roadblocks stem from its own complexities, one of which is the burdensome number of outdated, unauditable, disparate financial, logistics, and contract writing systems that hinder rapid decisionmaking across the Department. Systems stove piping has led to too many business and financial systems. These should be consolidated so that processes are simplified, internal controls improved, and data standardized, all leading to auditability. If confirmed, I would rapidly speed up the shutdown of legacy systems that only serve niche requirements, while leveraging cutting-edge technology to increase efficiencies, accountability and the ability for DOD to achieve a clean audit opinion. This is the sure way to facilitate audit remediation, save money, bring greater cybersecurity, implement single source data for enhanced decision-making, and move the audit needle.

*Question.* How does the DOD audit contribute to operational readiness, in your view?

*Answer.* Many naively believe audit is a backroom function, but that couldn't be further from the truth. To pass an audit, you must account for everything you own or owe—whether billets, bullets, bases, pay, planes, and ships—and be able to explain the resource's location, its condition, and its value. In fiscal year 2024, DOD owned \$4.1 trillion in assets and held \$4.3 trillion in liabilities. That is an amazing amount of resources and responsibility, all of which exists to ensure the defense of our Nation. The by-products of audit—accountability, strengthened controls, common data pictures, clean single source data, and better analytic tools—naturally lead our commanders and leaders to better insights and decisionmaking. That is how audit is an enabler to increasing operational readiness.

*Question.* Achieving a clean financial audit is massive undertaking for the Department. Do you have recommendations for how to improve that process to make it less costly and more efficient?

*Answer.* I am very respectful of auditor independence, but I don't believe the burden of audit is all on the auditee. Auditors and other stakeholders also bear responsibility to ensure audits are conducted efficiently and effectively. For example, the DOD OIG is DOD's overall financial statement auditor, but both it and the GAO ought to be ensuring their own independently conducted program audits build toward a comprehensive portfolio of audits that together lead to comprehensive insight. Like those being audited, auditors need to ensure everything they do is adding value to the overall effort to get DOD audited. They need to make sure there is no redundancy between audits, that information sought can't be obtained through more efficient means or from what's already been provided, and that timelines can expand and contract to get DOD's complex audit areas fully vetted. They expanded the timeline for the Marine Corps audit and it was a success. More importantly, auditors should be funded to have the capacity to fully audit. Likewise, we need to be thinking about technology changes that will make audit less manual, and more automated in ways that make sense and give confidence in test results.

*Question.* In your view, are there lessons that can be learned beyond the goal of a clean audit opinion? Based on your experience, do you anticipate operationalizing any intermediate lessons from the audit into the DOD's overall management reform objectives?

*Answer.* In my view, audit should never only be about the opinion. Rather, leaders should view audits as enduring opportunities to constantly seek improvements. Use the audit to pinpoint areas for enhancement and then do just that. Use the audit to build, leverage, and expand analytic tools and grow workforce capability and capacity. I understand that DOD audit needs were really the genesis for ADVANA, its central data repository that now tracks and supports everything from war efforts to humanitarian relief. The same goes for using the audit to force modern technology, such as implementing AI warehousing and AI budget formulation. Likewise, set the tone-from-the-top and then do what you say you're going to do. This is exactly what the Marine Corps did to get its first clean opinion. It's also what Secretary Hegseth is doing—setting the tone-from-the-top by vocally making audit a priority with urgency and applying this urgency to a mandate for reform.

## ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT

*Acquisition Reform*

*Question.* Recent NDAA's have enacted sweeping reforms to the Department's acquisition process, including introducing new acquisition flexibilities and delegating significant acquisition authority to the Services.

In your view, has the Department successfully adopted the flexibilities provided in the Adaptive Acquisition Framework? If not, what would you do to improve the adoption of rapid acquisition procedures to bring innovation into the Department?

*Answer.* Congress has given the Department of Defense authorities and flexibility to acquire capabilities at speed and scale through the Adaptive Acquisition Framework. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and the Military Departments to ensure the Department of Defense is effectively utilizing these authorities to support our warfighters. If I identify that the Department needs to do more to use these authorities, then I will work to make sure that the Department implements these reforms and fully leverages all authorities provided by Congress.

*Question.* How would you seek to balance the need to rapidly acquire and field innovative systems while ensuring acquisition programs stay on budget and schedule?

*Answer.* Our warfighters need the best capabilities to deter and defeat our adversaries in conflict. It is my understanding that Congress has given the Department the authorities to acquire and field innovative capabilities at speed and scale. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and other Department stakeholders to ensure we are providing proper oversight of acquisition programs, so they are staying on budget and schedule.

*Question.* Civilian control of the acquisition system has been a cornerstone of the post-World War Two acquisition system. What are your personal views on the principle of civilian control of the defense acquisition system?

*Answer.* A strong acquisition workforce is needed to ensure our warfighters are getting the best systems at speed and scale. Strong civilian leadership is needed to support the workforce in delivering the capabilities to the warfighters. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense to lead the Department and civilian experts to ensure the acquisition workforce is a good steward of taxpayer dollars and delivering the best capabilities to deter and defeat our adversaries.

*Requirements*

*Question.* The Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act required the Joint Staff to take a clean-sheet approach to the requirements process and the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act required the Secretary of Defense to establish an advisory panel on reforming the requirements process.

What recommendations would you make to the requirements process to make it more adaptive to changes in threats and technologies?

*Answer.* Too often, DOD creates inflexible and gold-plated requirements. Our warfighting requirements are and should be at the center of how the Department drives and shapes capability development. If confirmed, I will work to fully implement the direction from the FY2025 NDAA and establish an advisory panel on reforming the requirements process in coordination with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Department's entire acquisition process, including requirements, resourcing, and procurement, needs to focus on solving warfighting problems and delivering the capabilities they need to be the most lethal and effective force. The Department needs a process that embraces strategic thinking, focuses on warfighting needs, and unleashes our warfighting potential.

*Question.* What role do you see for the Joint Staff versus the military services in the requirements process?

*Answer.* The Joint Staff has provided leadership and collaboration in partnership with the military services and the combatant commands in the development and validation of military requirements within the current system. The Joint Staff also has analytical capacity utilizing data and support from the military services that will need to be relied upon to improve our processes and shape the future of the Joint Force. It is my expectation that this partnership will continue with appropriate civilian input.

*Defense Industrial Base*

*Question.* In recent years, Congress, industry, and DOD have increasingly expressed concerns about the health of the defense industrial base and its ability to reliably meet defense needs. The FY2021 NDAA sought to address these issues, in

part, by establishing an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy. In 2022, the Department of Defense released the National Defense Industrial Strategy (NDIS), and in 2024 the NDIS Implementation Plan was published. In your view, does the published NDIS and NDIS-Implementation Plan address the most significant challenges facing the defense industrial base? How would you address these challenges any differently, if confirmed?

Answer. I understand that the National Defense Industrial Strategy and its implementation plan have been designed to address the top industrial base challenges collectively identified across DOD, Congress, and Industry. If confirmed, I will be committed to addressing these challenges to our Defense Industrial Base and adapting as we manage new threats, Presidential orders, and updated industry inputs. I will work across the Department to ensure that we resource these priorities, with a focus on delivering expanded capability and capacity to accelerate deliveries to the warfighter.

*Question.* What steps should the Department take to increase the overall production capacity of the defense industrial base?

Answer. Increasing the overall production capacity of the defense and organic industrial base is paramount as we reduce our reliance on adversarial nations and increase our domestic supply chain resilience. I understand that the NDIS lays out mechanisms to increase production capacity, including incentivizing industry by investing in extra capacity, and broadening the supplier base by investing in new production methods. If confirmed, I will prioritize efforts to strengthen our industrial base and support the warfighter.

*Question.* What steps should the Department take—on its own or as part of a whole-of-government approach—to increase domestic and allied industrial capacity and reduce reliance on suppliers in China?

Answer. Reducing reliance on adversarial nations, particularly PRC sources, is a critical effort to achieving peace through strength. Proactively developing, growing, and sustaining multiple and redundant production lines across U.S. and allied sources is imperative for the United States to ensure necessary production capability and capacity while mitigating exposure to supply disruptions. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to prioritize efforts to reduce our reliance on suppliers from China, or any other adversaries.

*Question.* Given the need to ensure fair competition within the defense industrial base, how would you ensure your dealings with the defense industrial base are free from potential conflicts of interest?

Answer. I am committed to the highest ethical standards and, if confirmed, I will retain no investments which may lead to a potential conflict of interest.

#### TEST AND EVALUATION

*Question.* A natural tension exists between the goals of major defense acquisition programs to reduce cost and accelerate schedule and the need to ensure performance meets requirements and specifications—the objective of the test and evaluation function.

If confirmed, how would you approach your relationship with the Director, Operational Test and Evaluation, particularly in light of the independence and direct reporting relationships and responsibilities accorded the Director in law?

Answer. If confirmed, I would promote early and frequent communication and coordination between DOT&E and other DOD entities to mitigate and eliminate natural tensions. I would enforce resolution of disagreements through evidence-based analysis and prioritization of our warfighters and their ability to achieve desired effects.

DOT&E's mission, as directed by law, is to report on weapon system performance (effectiveness, suitability, survivability, and when necessary, lethality) based on independent analysis of collected data in operationally representative test. If confirmed, I pledge to rigorously maintain DOT&E's independence and ability to execute their mission because DOD decisions and warfighter optimization of their systems depend on DOT&E reports on weapon system performance.

*Question.* The Major Range and Test Facilities Base (MRTFB) and DOD's associated test and evaluation infrastructure are critical national assets. In recent years it has become clear that digital engineering and digital modeling and simulation tools and infrastructure will be critical to achieving the Department's objectives for optimizing existing legacy weapons systems and facilitating the delivery of modern software-defined capabilities.

Are you satisfied with DOD's test and evaluation capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforces and infrastructure of the Military Services? Please ex-

plain your answer. If not, how would you address shortfalls in the test and evaluation enterprise, if confirmed?

Answer. The MRTFB, including its associated test and evaluation (T&E) infrastructure and workforce, is critical for our Nation to deliver weapons systems that give our warfighters a decisive advantage in any confrontation. Since I am not yet confirmed, I cannot fully evaluate the effectiveness of the test and evaluation infrastructure. If confirmed, I will review the gaps in the Department's T&E capabilities, including the T&E workforces and infrastructure, to ensure DOD has the digital and software expertise needed to optimize existing legacy weapon systems and deliver modern software-defined capabilities.

*Question.* Based on your experience, how do you see artificial intelligence (AI), digital twin technology and model based systems engineering (MBSE) approaches improving both test and evaluations approaches, and supporting improved acquisition outcomes?

Answer. It's my understanding that AI, digital twin technology, and MBSE significantly enhance the Department's T&E approaches and decisionmaking. Advancements in these technologies lead to faster product development and reduced costs, ultimately supporting improved acquisition decisions and outcomes, even into sustainment.

*Question.* In your view, how can industry provided data be better leveraged with government furnished test data? Do you believe current data standards are sufficient for current needs, as well as the needs for emerging technologies like AI, digital twin and MBSE?

Answer. It is important for the Government to partner with industry to better serve the warfighters and I understand that the Department is focusing on efforts to standardize data across government and industry, establish data sharing agreements, and fielding interoperable systems that can easily integrate data from different sources. The Department's efforts in this area must continue to evolve to harness developments in private industry and, if confirmed, I will support all efforts which will make our Department more capable of supporting the warfighter.

#### DEFENSE SECURITY COOPERATION

*Question.* What should be the primary objectives of Department of Defense security sector assistance activities, in your view?

Answer. DOD security cooperation programs can provide Allies and partners with military equipment, services, and training to support the U.S. national security objectives and meet partner capability requirements identified by the Combatant Commanders. If security cooperation programs do not support or meet the requirements of the U.S. national security strategy, these programs should not be funded.

*Question.* Is the Department of Defense appropriately organized and resourced to execute security sector assistance effectively? If not, what changes would you make or direct, if confirmed?

Answer. I understand that many stakeholders, including many in Congress, believe that the current timelines to deliver critical capabilities to our Allies and partners are far too lengthy. If confirmed, I will work with partners, including this Congress to make the process as timely and effective as possible at advancing the interests of the United States and our Allies.

#### BASE REALIGNMENT AND CLOSURE (BRAC)

*Question.* It has been noted repeatedly that the 2005 BRAC round resulted in major and unanticipated implementation costs and saved far less money than originally estimated.

Do you believe that another BRAC round is needed? If so, what changes to law and implementation policy would you recommend to improve on the outcomes of the 2005 BRAC process?

Answer. If confirmed, I will explore all options to enhance the Department's ability to restore lethality, including whether a request for BRAC authority may be warranted to optimize the Department's installations footprint. If the Secretary of Defense and President were to determine a BRAC is appropriate, we will work with Congress to identify and implement process improvements.

*Question.* If you are confirmed, and were Congress to authorize another BRAC round, how would you set priorities for infrastructure reduction and consolidation across DOD?

Answer. The Department needs to ensure that its infrastructure portfolio is appropriately sized and utilized. If confirmed, I would commit to reducing the amount of excess infrastructure and ensure the Department's infrastructure aligns with mission requirements. If Congress were to authorize a future BRAC, I would ensure the

priorities for infrastructure reduction and consolidation would align with Secretary of Defense's priorities of rebuilding the military by matching threats to capabilities and reestablishing deterrence by defending our Homeland.

#### OPERATIONAL ENERGY AND ENERGY RESILIENCE

*Question.* The Department defines *operational energy* as the energy required for training, moving, and sustaining military forces and weapons platforms for military operations, including the energy used by tactical power systems, generators, and weapons platforms. As early as 2004, then-General Mattis testified before Congress that DOD must “unleash us from the tether of fuel” if U.S. Forces are to sustain momentum and retain freedom of maneuver. He cautioned that “units would be faced with unacceptable limitations because of their dependence on fuel” and resupply efforts “made us vulnerable in ways that would be exploited by the enemy.” Today, DOD energy requirements are projected to increase significantly due to technological advances in weapons systems and distributed operations over longer operating distances.

If confirmed, what would you do to harness innovations in operational energy and link them with emerging joint operational concepts?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure that sustaining the energy needs of our forces in contested environments is prioritized across operations, planning, and capability development. I will ensure that the incorporation of operational energy innovations is done in a manner that enhances operational effectiveness and extends our operational reach. We will also consider changes in our tactics, techniques, and procedures, assess and mitigate risks to the energy supportability of our operational plans, and include appropriate operational risks and logistics constraints in the development of new capabilities.

*Question.* How can DOD acquisition systems better address requirements related to the use of energy in military platforms? In your view, should energy supportability be a key performance parameter in the requirements process?

*Answer.* The energy key performance parameter, which is required by statute, is critical to ensure that energy supportability is appropriately considered during the requirements development process. Reducing the energy demand of our operational capabilities and improving their posture in terms of energy supportability reduces risks created by fuel logistics and ensures maximum lethality. If confirmed, I will ensure that the development of capability requirements is based on a robust analysis of energy supportability risks and that acquisition decisionmaking accounts for energy supportability and emerging technologies throughout program lifecycles.

#### SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION

*Question.* United States superiority in key areas of innovation is decreasing or has disappeared. Our competitors are engaging in aggressive military modernization and advanced weaponry development. DOD has identified 14 key areas in which investment to develop next generation operational capabilities is imperative: hypersonics; integrated network system of systems; directed energy; advanced computing and software; human-machine interfaces; integrated sensing and cyber; space; quantum science; microelectronics; trusted AI and autonomy; renewable energy generation and storage; future generation wireless technology; advanced materials; and biotechnology. Much of the innovation in these technologies that could prove suitable for national defense purposes is occurring outside of the traditional defense industry.

If confirmed, would you make any changes or adjustments in current DOD modernization priorities?

*Answer.* DOD should always be surveying the technology landscape and updating investments and priorities. If confirmed, I will ensure the DOD research and engineering ecosystem is responsive and that it addresses critical threats, capabilities, and opportunities.

*Question.* What do you see as the most significant challenges (e.g., technical, organizational, or cultural) to DOD's development of these key technologies?

*Answer.* There are unique challenges associated with different types of technology development. Some may be organizational and cultural. Some technologies face more basic scientific or physics challenges. It is my understanding that limited access to test assets or aging test infrastructure, as well as failures to prioritize certain technology areas are all challenges DOD faces in technology development. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department evaluates each of these challenges within their unique context and attempts to resolve them in the most appropriate manner.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the mechanisms in DOD that the science and technology community uses to coordinate, integration, and reduce unwarranted duplication across the S&T enterprise?

I understand that the USD(R&E) is required by statute to “designate Senior Officials for Critical Technology Areas supportive of the National Defense Strategy.” These individuals execute statutory mandates to coordinate research and engineering investments, integrate technologies, and align budgets to promote technology transition and delivery. These Senior Officials are also explicitly directed by statute to advise the USD(R&E) of unwanted or inefficient technology duplication, areas of misalignment, or lack of coordination.

Moreover, I understand that the S&T community and the executives responsible for management and oversight of the Department’s S&T resources have established an S&T Executive Committee and Communities of Interest in the interest of ensuring increased coordination and integration of efforts amongst the S&T community and consequently reducing unwanted duplication across the S&T enterprise.

If confirmed, I am committed to reviewing and evaluating the DOD’s processes to identify any opportunities for improvement and reform.

*Question.* In your view are the Department’s investments in these technologies appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all Military Departments and Agencies?

Answer. Since I have not been confirmed, I do not have access to the detail necessary to reach a firm conclusion about these investments. However, if confirmed, I will prioritize the review of the Department’s investments in future technologies to ensure that the Department’s investments are aligned with national security needs.

*Question.* Based on your experience, are there enduring technology areas that might not be considered emerging, such as energetic materials or corrosion control, that DOD should remain focused on as categories outside of the modernization priorities?

Answer. The DOD should constantly review and update its modernization priorities to ensure it is responsive to the needs of the warfighter and is addressing critical threats, capabilities, and opportunities. For example, outside of the 14 Critical Technology Areas, the OUSD(R&E) also focuses on research in munitions; energetics; alternative positioning, navigation, and timing capabilities; counter-unmanned systems; nuclear modernization; autonomous systems; and advanced materials. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department allocates its resources in an appropriate manner to address the threats from our adversaries.

*Question.* What steps would you take, if confirmed, to strengthen National Security Industrial Base and National Security Innovation Base systems and processes to ensure that critical information is protected from foreign economic and industrial espionage?

Answer. I understand that the Department has multiple authorities to preemptively protect our economic and national security interests, especially in an era of intense competition with China.

If confirmed, I will work with DOD, and Interagency partners, to ensure DOD undertakes whatever steps necessary to safeguard the technologies, capabilities, and critical information necessary to defend the Homeland, and equip our warfighters with the most lethal, advanced, and exquisite capabilities—free of foreign influence and industrial espionage.

*Question.* In your view, how can DOD balance the openness of the S&T enterprise, while still protecting the most sensitive research from nefarious exploitation by our adversaries?

Answer. I believe that DOD can balance openness and protection through a risk-based approach that integrates security without stifling innovation. I understand that the current approach includes targeted protection, strengthening the due diligence of DOD partnerships, proper consideration of control or classification of information, and counterintelligence to detect and mitigate threats in real time. If confirmed, I will work to promote research security by providing tight protections around DOD’s most sensitive work and ensuring adequate protections for less sensitive fundamental research.

#### *Deputy’s Innovation Steering Group*

*Question.* The current Deputy Secretary of Defense established the Deputy’s Innovation Steering Group (DISG) to help improve coordination of innovation efforts across the Department and to break down process barriers. It has been the main forum for coordination and selection of projects to be funded under Replicator, as well as prototyping activities under Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve (RDER).

What do you see as the role of the Deputy in fostering innovation in the Department? In your view, how should that role be deconflicted with the responsibilities of the Under Secretary for Defense for Research and Engineering?

Answer. If confirmed, I will advance a focused and agile culture of innovation within the Department. It is imperative that we make sure that we have the right innovation that we can scale and get to the warfighter. My role will be to ensure the Department has the tools and resources needed to advance this vision and that these efforts are integrated and focused on the right Warfighting challenges.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the DISG? Are there elements that you might want to save, adapt or discard if you are confirmed?

Answer. My understanding is that the Deputy's Innovation Steering Group (DISG), co-chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, is designed to rapidly evaluate, identify, and execute innovative solutions for key operational problems facing the Joint Force. The DISG focuses on critical joint operational gaps that need fielded capabilities more quickly than the Department's current acquisitions process is able to provide. If confirmed as the Deputy Secretary, I will carefully evaluate the DISG, and all other processes, to make sure that we can remove barriers to innovation and fielding critical capabilities at scale.

*Question.* The Defense Innovation Unit was elevated to a principal staff assistant (PSA) for the Secretary and the Deputy. If confirmed, how might you leverage that role to better support the Department's innovation activities?

Answer. The Department needs to source and field capabilities from the commercial industry more quickly and at greater scale. In key technology areas like software, commercial industry has rapidly adjusted their development timelines to meet a fast-changing market, while DOD is still struggling to reframe its acquisition process from a hardware-centric to a software-centric approach. Since I am not yet confirmed, I cannot specifically identify the best ways to leverage DIU's capabilities but, if confirmed, I commit to prioritizing DOD's efforts to harness our industry against threats, revitalize our defense industrial base, and scale and rapidly field emerging technologies.

#### *Replicator*

*Question.* Under Deputy Secretary Hicks, DOD established the Replicator effort to focus the Department's energy and resources on the highest priority needs.

What is your view on the Replicator program?

Answer. The Department must do more to deliver capabilities for warfighters, at scale, on the most critical operational problems. My understanding is that the Replicator initiative has focused on two critical areas: Replicator-1 is focused on delivering thousands of all-domain attritable autonomous systems to INDOPACOM to counter the pacing threat posed by the People's Republic of China, and Replicator-2 is focusing on countering the threat posed by small unmanned aerial systems to our most critical installations and force concentrations. Both of these operational problems remain pressing challenges and, if confirmed, I will continue to ensure the Department focuses on delivering innovative capabilities to warfighters in line with the Secretary's priorities of rebuilding our military and reestablishing deterrence.

*Question.* In your view, is a separate process like Replicator needed within DOD to address the most pressing investment areas or should the existing acquisition and management process be sufficient to address urgent needs?

Answer. It is my understanding the Replicator program tailors the rapid acquisition pathway to ensure rapid acquisition and deployment for items urgently needed to react to an enemy threat or respond to significant and urgent safety situations. I believe the Department must utilize all of the authorities available to acquire capabilities to meet the most pressing and urgent needs, to include the capabilities being accelerated through Replicator. If confirmed, I will work with the appropriate stakeholders to review the value of initiatives like Replicator.

#### *Private Equity and Venture Capital*

*Question.* In 2023, the Department established the Office of Strategic Capital to give DOD the capability to issue loans and loan guarantees to complement and supplement traditional grants and funding for innovative technologies. This has opened up new avenues for other means to support small and nontraditional defense companies in more cost-effective ways.

In your view, how do financial instruments, like loans, private equity and venture capital, fit into the DOD tool box to support innovation and technology development for national security purposes?

Answer. Capital markets are a major source of strength for the United States in the global competition for technological advantage. DOD can leverage that advan-

tage through financial instruments like loans and loan guarantees, which have been used as part of proven strategies to attract and scale private capital in support of national security priorities, including the development of critical technologies, their components, and the ability to grow and scale production.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you improve understanding of these tools, and in turn, improve their use alongside traditional funding mechanisms?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would work through DOD and with other United States Government agencies, Congress, the private sector, and other key stakeholders to highlight the efficacy and impact of these tools and support their use to address U.S. national security priorities. To that end, I would support entities like the Office of Strategic Capital and leverage fora such as the Strategic Capital Advisory Council, the forthcoming National Security Capital Forum, and the interagency process to engage and coordinate with stakeholders on opportunities to use attract and scale capital to further DOD's mission.

*Question.* Based on your experience in the private sector, do you have any recommendations or suggestions in leveraging private equity and venture capital, if confirmed?

*Answer.* Based on my experience in the private sector, I believe that private equity and venture capital can bring significant resources to bear in support of U.S. national security priorities and can offer insight into market dynamics, opportunities, and risks that affect DOD's mission. If confirmed, I would engage representatives from venture capital and private equity alongside other stakeholders.

*Question.* How would you characterize the threat from adversarial capital from hostile actors like China to our national security industrial base?

*Answer.* Adversarial capital, particularly from China, poses a significant threat to the National Security Industrial Base by enabling intellectual property theft, supply chain infiltration, and strategic influence over critical technologies vital to our military advantage.

If confirmed, I will review Department and Interagency efforts to address adversarial capital and I will work with the appropriate authorities, including this body, to protect against adversarial capital and cyber intrusions.

*Question.* Do you have any recommendations on how DOD should be structured to address these issues of economic competition, especially when it comes to adversarial attempts to gain strategic facilities or technologies that might be used against us?

*Answer.* It is imperative that the Department is postured to address strategic competition with China in all aspects which could undermine American warfighting advantages. If confirmed, I will work with stakeholders across DOD to review our structure and resourcing to determine whether changes are necessary.

#### MILITARY TALENT MANAGEMENT

*Question.* In your judgment, how effective is the military at identifying, promoting, and rewarding top performers?

*Answer.* My experience in the private sector has highlighted the critical need to identify and reward top talent within an organization and, in my career, I have worked with multiple highly talented serving and former Service Members. If confirmed, I look forward to examining how the Department identifies, promotes and rewards individuals based on their merits and, if I identify changes which will improve performance, then I commit to working with the necessary authorities, including this body, to make our Service Members more lethal and effective.

*Question.* Similarly, how effective is the military at identifying and removing underperforming or counterproductive servicemembers?

*Answer.* Managing an effective organization does, at times, require removing underperforming team members. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Services at the direction of the Secretary to ensure the Department has the right people in the right positions, and that personnel decisions are based solely on merit.

*Question.* What should be done to improve military talent management?

*Answer.* Talent management is a key component to any successful organization, and the Department of Defense is no different. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Services at the direction of the Secretary to ensure the Department effectively attracts, recruits, develops and retains the talent necessary to build and sustain a lethal fighting force.

#### ASSIGNMENT POLICIES FOR WOMEN IN THE SERVICE

*Question.* Since 2015, all military occupations and units have been open to the assignment of any servicemember who can meet the occupational standards, including women.



Do you believe in the fundamental principle that any person, regardless of gender, who meets occupational standards for a particular job should be afforded the opportunity to compete for and perform the job?

Answer. My view is that every servicemember, regardless of sex, who can meet objective occupational and readiness standards for a career field should have the opportunity to compete for jobs in that field.

#### SERVICE OF OPENLY GAY AND LESBIAN SERVICEMEMBERS

*Question.* Since the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) in 2010, gay and lesbian members of the Armed Forces have served in the United States military without having to conceal or lie about their sexual orientation. According to RAND, approximately 6 percent of the force identify as gay or lesbian. Successive chiefs of service in administrations of both political parties have noted that repeal of DADT did not create any significant challenges opponents foresaw.

Do you believe repeal of DADT has created challenges for the military? If yes, please provide a detailed explanation.

Answer. Our servicemembers are focused first and foremost on being the most ready, lethal force in the world. The repeal of DADT has allowed all Americans—who can meet the military’s high standards to maintain readiness—to serve our country. That’s the way it should be.

#### SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

*Question.* Despite significant efforts by the Military Services to enhance their response to sexual assaults, including measures to care for victims and hold assailants accountable, the prevalence of sexual assault and unwanted sexual conduct, primarily for female servicemembers aged 17 to 24, remains too high.

Do you believe the policies, programs, and resources, including the DOD Restricted (Confidential) Reporting Policy, that DOD and the Military Services have put in place to prevent and respond to sexual assault, and to protect servicemembers who report sexual assault from retaliation, are working? If not, what else must be done?

Answer. Sexual assault harms our warfighters and our military readiness. It has no place in the military. I know the Department has committed significant resources and undertaken numerous efforts to address sexual assault. If I am confirmed, I intend to learn more about the specifics of these efforts as we continue to rid the force of this criminal behavior.

*Question.* If confirmed as the Deputy Secretary of Defense, you would recommend additional authority from Congress to improve the Department’s programs to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assaults?

Answer. Given both the Department’s and Congress’ ongoing efforts, it is my impression that significant authority already exists to further these initiatives. If confirmed, I commit to learning more about the authorities that exist and, if necessary, I will work with this body to make any necessary changes.

*Question.* If confirmed, what specific role and tasks would you establish for yourself in DOD’s program of preventing and responding to both sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that our policies, programs, and resources are as strong as possible to eliminate sexual assault and other behaviors that distract our servicemembers from the mission and undercut cohesion and trust. We must have ready, lethal warfighters who can deploy and fight as a cohesive unit.

#### ACTIVE AND RESERVE COMPONENT END STRENGTH

*Question.* The Active military is smaller today than at any other point since the start of World War II. Since 2020, the Active Force has shrunk by over 60,000 personnel.

Do you believe military end strength should increase? If yes, where do you believe that growth should occur?

Answer. Military end strength should be based on what is necessary to support the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary to determine what that number is and to ensure the Department meets that target.

*Question.* What aggregate active end strength do you believe is necessary to meet the demands placed on the Military Services by the 2022 NDS and associated operational plans?

Answer. The aggregate Active end strength should be based on the requirements in the National Defense Strategy and associated operational plans. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary as he builds the next National Defense

Strategy, and I will work to ensure that we build a force which can achieve to determine what that number is and to ensure the Department meets that target.

#### ROLE OF THE RESERVE COMPONENT

*Question.* Historically, the Reserve components have been positioned as a strategic reserve to be used in the event of significant armed conflict involving the United States. In the post-9/11 era, reserve forces have been used more extensively to support both contingency operations and ongoing military requirements in a garrison environment. Today, in addition to being an operational reserve, members of the Reserve component are used continuously as a part-time workforce for the Department of Defense to perform its ongoing training and to meet readiness requirements.

In your view, should the Reserve components serve as a part-time workforce, an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or some combination of those? In light of your answer, do the Reserve components require increased levels of full-time support and oversight by the Active component, including improved equipment, increased training, adequate compensation and reimbursement, effective career management, balanced Professional Military Education requirements, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?

*Answer.* This Secretary is committed to restoring lethality in our fighting force and supporting President Trump's agenda to build peace through strength. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to assess Reserve Component roles, resources, training, and levels to ensure the Total Force is organized, manned, trained and equipped to best meet our national security objectives.

*Question.* In your view, what legislative reforms should be made in order to facilitate easier transitions for members of all components between active and reserve status?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to determine what reforms are necessary to ensure the Total Force can attract and retain the talent necessary to meet our national security objectives.

#### OPERATIONAL TEMPO (OPTEMPO)

*Question.* Since the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military services continue to operate at a historically high OPTEMPO, which senior civilian and military leaders in the Department of Defense have deemed "unsustainable."

What is your plan to adjust OPTEMPO in the Armed Forces to ensure that servicemembers and their families are healthy, fit, adequately rested, and have a sustainable lifestyle so that they are prepared for a potential future major conflict?

*Answer.* Despite the end of large-scale United States troop deployments to Iraq and the United States military presence in Afghanistan, I understand that the military's operational tempo remains high. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Military Service Chiefs to ensure that we are sending the right forces to accomplish our Nation's objectives and to refine our deployments, rotations, and domestic training to ensure that our OPTEMPO is sustainable. We must continue to maximize readiness for any future conflict while simultaneously avoiding exhausting our Force.

#### RECRUITING AND RETENTION

*Question.* The 2024 National Defense Strategy Commission stated that "The DOD workforce and the all-volunteer force provide an unmatched advantage. However, recruiting failures have shrunk the force and raise serious questions about the all-volunteer force in peacetime, let alone in major combat." In addition, DOD studies indicate that only about 23 percent of today's youth population is eligible for military service, and only a fraction of those who meet military accession standards are interested in serving.

Do you agree with the premise that the shortage in the number of American youth eligible, qualified for, and interested in serving in the Armed Forces poses an existential threat to national security?

*Answer.* Yes, I do. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary to help the Department address this significant challenge.

*Question.* In your opinion, why are so few individuals in the 17–24 age range eligible for service, and what can be done to increase the pool of individuals qualified for, and interested in military service?

*Answer.* I understand that many individuals in this age group are disqualified from military service due to medical conditions, including mental health concerns, obesity, and diabetes. The recent executive order establishing the "President's Make America Healthy Again Commission" will improve this situation over time by ag-

gressively combating the critical health challenges facing our citizens. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary in ensuring that the Department has the right standards and incentivizes young people to serve.

*Question.* What programs, policies, or tools does the Department need to increase the propensity to serve of today's youth?

Answer. I understand that the propensity of young Americans to serve has long been in decline. I expect the President's actions in his first weeks in office and the Secretary's commitment to a reinvigorated warrior culture to increase the interest of young people in serving in our Nation's military. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting the Secretary in finding ways to continue to increase the propensity to serve of today's youth.

*Question.* If required to choose between maintaining high recruitment and retention standards and achieving authorized end strength levels, which would be more important, in your view?

Answer. President Trump and Secretary Hegseth have made it clear that the Department must recruit the most capable individuals and ensure every servicemember meets the high standards to serve and defend this Nation. The Department should not lower its standards, but rather should inspire young Americans to strive to meet those standards.

*Question.* Do you believe the total military compensation system, including deferred and non-cash benefits, is adequate to recruit and retain the number of highly qualified individuals needed for military service?

Answer. The Department must ensure that it provides a compensation package sufficient to attract young Americans. It also needs to effectively communicate the benefits, including non-monetary benefits, of service to those young people.

*Question.* Do you believe the Armed Forces recruits and retains a diverse workforce, representative of the nation?

Answer. Servicemembers come from all across America to be part of a unified team, and the Department should welcome all who meet its high standards. The Secretary has made it clear that those high standards will be the same for all, regardless of race, gender or ethnicity.

*Question.* Do you believe it is important that servicemembers possess the ability, including that acquired through training, to work effectively with fellow servicemembers from different geographic areas, backgrounds, education, and experience to maximize the effectiveness of the Armed Forces?

Answer. Yes. Throughout America's history, the military has been a leading force in building strong teams out of young Americans from across our country. As Secretary Hegseth has made clear, the unity of our military is its strength.

#### MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE AND FAMILY READINESS

*Question.* Military quality of life and military family readiness are critical factors in the recruitment and retention of servicemembers. Military families want access to high quality education for their children, and to high quality health care and childcare services on military installations and in local communities. Military spouses seek education and employment opportunities, and military families benefit from modern morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) services.

If confirmed, what quality of life and MWR programs would you make a priority?

Answer. I fully support quality of life and MWR programs that reinforce a resilient and ready force, both at home stations and in deployed environments. These essential programs include commissaries, spouse education and employment support, high quality childcare, mental health counseling services, and fitness opportunities, build and sustain warfighter and family readiness.

If confirmed, I will support the efficient use of resources to ensure our warfighters and military families have access to the quality of life they deserve. Quality of life programs are vital to retaining our talented servicemembers and their families, restoring the warrior ethos, and rebuilding the strongest, most lethal military in the world.

*Question.* The Committee often hears that Active component military families have difficulty obtaining child care both on base and off base. Acknowledging that there is a nation-wide shortage of qualified child care providers, the unique circumstances around military life require stable and reliable childcare options in any economic or labor environment.

What are your innovative ideas for increasing the availability of accessible, high-quality childcare, at an appropriate cost, for military families?

Answer. Access to proximate and quality childcare is critical for our servicemembers and their families. If confirmed, I will fully support the Department's efforts to partner with Congress, States, and local leaders to attract and re-

tain the best available childcare professionals and expand childcare availability in our Child Development Centers.

#### NON-DEPLOYABLE SERVICEMEMBERS

*Question.* The Department has published DODI 1332.45, *Retention Determinations for Non-Deployable Servicemembers*.

Do you agree that servicemembers who are non-deployable for more than 12 consecutive months should be subject either to separation from service or referral into the Disability Evaluation System?

Answer. I agree with the Secretary that servicemembers who are non-deployable for 12 consecutive months or more should be reviewed for separation or a medical disability evaluation as appropriate.

#### MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM

*Question.* The Military Health System (MHS) is one of the Nation's largest medical systems. Its threefold mission includes: 1) Ensuring military personnel are healthy enough to perform their assigned tasks; 2) Ensuring military medical personnel are trained and ready to provide medical care to support operating forces around world; and 3) Provide a medical benefit to over 9.5 billion beneficiaries.

In your judgment, how should the Department of Defense balance the sometimes-competing demands of the MHS mission?

Answer. I don't think that these missions are in competition with each other, and are in fact, complementary. As I understand it, the principal mission of the Military Health System is to ensure the force is ready, and our medical teams are ready—wherever in the world we may need to go.

The decision that the Department leadership must make to carry out this mission in the most efficient manner is this: what care should be delivered in military medical treatment facilities and what care should it purchase from the private sector? It's a complex framework for decisionmaking—and requires consideration for where military forces are training and operating from, regardless of the medical capabilities in the local communities. DOD must resource the Military Health System, including where we place our military and civilian manpower, to most effectively provide health care and generate medical forces.

And make no mistake—I will ensure our servicemembers and their families have the finest care available, wherever it is provided.

*Question.* The MHS was recently reorganized to increase focus on combat casualty care while maintain robust health care for authorized beneficiaries. The Department of Defense requested over \$60 billion for MHS in fiscal year 2025, which is \$10 billion more than the enacted MHS budget from fiscal year 2021. Despite this increase, the MHS remains underfunded in certain key areas.

If confirmed, what actions will you take to ensure that the MHS is capable of caring for our combat wounded personnel as well as providing quality medical care to authorized beneficiaries?

Answer. Military medicine is one part of a no fail mission. We owe it to the men and women who serve this country to provide the highest quality, lifesaving health care both on the battlefield and at home. We will not cut any corners when it comes to this mission.

If confirmed, I will carefully look at our military medical budget, and ensure we are requesting appropriations and using those funds in an efficient way that best supports this mission, to include unfunded requirements that demand attention, as Secretary Hegseth has pledged. I will establish clear and precise resourcing priorities and strict controls to show good faith and transparency when requesting an increase in appropriations, as well as emphasizing efficiency in operations. Finally, I will also look to compare Military Health System performance and costs against other leading health systems in the United States.

I also recognize that health care is expensive—and DOD is not insulated from health care cost growth, whether that's due to the cost of prescription drugs, new technology, or the need to operate in medically remote locations. I will ask our medical leaders to seek opportunities to be better purchasers of health care services and to find economies of scale and other efficiencies.

*Question.* What should be done to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the Military Health System?

Answer. As an investor with a great deal of experience in the private sector, I will bring a strong focus on mission and efficiency to the Department. Since I have not been confirmed, I do not know the details, but I can assure that you I will work with our Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to determine the best ways to raise effectiveness and efficiency within the Military Health System.

## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

*Question.* DOD is the Federal Government's largest employer of civilian personnel. The vast majority of DOD civilian personnel policies comport with requirements set forth in title 5 of the U.S. Code, concerning the Federal civilian workforce generally, and corresponding regulations under the purview of the Office of Personnel Management. This has over the years, it has provided numerous extraordinary hiring and management authorities tailored to specific segments of the DOD civilian workforce to meet unique DOD workforce requirements.

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

*Answer.* The Department has great people working for it and I am committed to making sure that the Department continues to have the best people. Throughout my career, I have focused on getting the right people into the right jobs and in structuring organizations to use their people effectively. If I am confirmed, I will review the effectiveness of the numerous personnel management authorities and systems and explore greater efficiencies. The Department must make every effort to do this well in order to recruit and retain highly skilled professionals that contribute to the Department's mission and goals.

*Question.* Do you advocate the creation of a new "title 10" DOD civilian workforce and a concomitant body of title 10 personnel authorities applicable only to the DOD civilian workforce? If so, how should these new authorities improve on title 5, in your view?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will focus on making sure that the Department has the best people and I am aware this proposal could provide a unique opportunity to design a personnel system specifically tailored to the Department's mission, potentially surpassing the prescriptive limitations of Title 5. If confirmed, I will work with the Congress to carefully evaluate this and any other reform which can better equip the Department to address evolving national security challenges.

*Question.* What recommendations do you have to improve DOD's management of its civilian workforce?

*Answer.* I have extensive business experience in finding great people and restricting organizations to use their people well. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to identify ways to strengthen our civilian talent management efforts and implement modernized hiring practices that enhance workforce efficiency. The civilian workforce is a key part of the DOD team, and the Department must efficiently recruit and retain highly skilled civilian team members who contribute to the Department's core missions.

*Question.* Do you believe DOD's civilian workforce is part of the "total force" and operates as an indispensable force multiplier for the armed forces?

*Answer.* DOD civilian employees are integral to the lethality and readiness of the Force. For example, the tens of thousands of civilian employees working in depots and arsenals ensure equipment readiness, support mobilization and contingency operations, and enhance operational capability by maintaining/upgrading military equipment to ensure the fighting force has the tools necessary to accomplish the mission.

## DEFENSE DEPARTMENT AND THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

*Question.* Since September 11, 2001, collaboration—both analytical and operational—between the Defense Department and the Intelligence Community has grown increasingly close. On one hand, seamless collaboration is vital to effective and rapid responses to non-traditional threats, and bringing together the strengths of the full spectrum of defense and intelligence capabilities can generate more effective solutions to complex problems. On the other hand, without effective management and oversight, such collaboration risks blurring distinct agency missions, authorities, and funding, as well as creating redundant lines of effort.

In your view, are there aspects of the current relationship between the Department and the Intelligence Community that should be re-examined or modified?

*Answer.* DOD-Intelligence collaboration is vital to national security and so believe that it is vital to be always improving collaboration. From my time and experience chairing the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, I believe intelligence priorities, resource management, and information sharing are some of the most critical areas for collaboration. From what I can tell from outside the Department, coordination and collaboration with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and the broader IC has improved, but we can do better. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary in working closely with the DNI to ensure the IC is fully supporting the DOD's priorities and that DOD's intelligence elements are also responsive to the ODNI's requirements.

## 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 without delay? 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, and their respective staffs with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

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.

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[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

## SHRINKING AIR FORCE

1. Senator COTTON. Mr. Feinberg, our Air Force has shrunk from 4,321 total fighter aircraft in 1989, to 2,024 fighter aircraft today. After you apply mission capable rates, only 724 aircraft are mission capable for war. How will a continued divestment of airframes impact the Air Force's ability to project air power as tasked by the Key West Agreement of 1947?

Mr. FEINBERG. The role of the Air Force in any future fight is increasing, yet our Air Force is currently the oldest and smallest it has been in its history. My understanding is that the Department of the Air Force (DAF) is transitioning to a smaller, but more capable, force focused on long-range kill chains. Ultimately, I believe we must be able to project power for our deterrence and homeland defense with a mixture of stand-off and stand-in, and asymmetric capabilities. We need to invest in a family of medium-and long-range penetrating airframes coupled with modern munitions, human-machine teaming, and a hardened warfighting network.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the DAF and this Congress to ensure that short-term readiness investments are tailored to maintain a ready deterrent force, but that we do not cannibalize our ability to modernize the joint force for the future fight.

#### RECAPITALIZATION

2. Senator COTTON. Mr. Feinberg, the average age of our fighter fleet is 30.3 years old. Our fleet needs new aircraft. How do you plan to recapitalize the Air Force fleet and improve our mission capable rates both to meet current mission taskings and to build a force required for the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) fight?

Mr. FEINBERG. Maintaining legacy force structure while simultaneously pursuing modernization has forced reductions in procurement and readiness accounts. Divesting legacy weapon systems that are no longer reliable, or suitable to address the pacing threat can free resources for future capabilities and higher near-term readiness priority investments.

If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff, combatant commands, and the Air Force to assess the current capability and underlying requirements, and I look forward to working with Congress and the DAF to continue modernization efforts to improve readiness and extend the life of weapons systems where practical, while procuring modernized capabilities that can compete in a high-end conflict.

#### LEGACY SPENDING

3. Senator COTTON. Mr. Feinberg, you referenced budget cuts to legacy spending during your testimony and prioritizing funding for primary missions. What investments are required in the Department of Defense to meet the National Defense Strategy?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I would prioritize a top to bottom review of legacy DOD spending to understand what missions this spending supports. I anticipate the next National Defense Strategy will continue to prioritize China as a pacing threat and have a renewed focus on defending the homeland to align with the President's America First policy.

I would want to understand the effectiveness of legacy spending profiles in achieving those two DOD missions, and any others prioritized in the National Defense Strategy, so that I can ensure Defense spending focuses on the most cost-effective approaches and capabilities.

#### TWO FRONT WAR

4. Senator COTTON. Mr. Feinberg, adversaries in U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) could take advantage of a fight in the INDOPACOM theater and commence a two-front war against America and its allies. Do you believe the Department of Defense (DOD) should invest for a two-front war?

Mr. FEINBERG. I understand that countries like China, Iran, Russia, and North Korea are aligning on issues of common interest in a manner that suggests a cooperative approach to undermining U.S. influence and our alliances. Concerningly, a conflict between any one of these actors and the United States may create an opportunity for a second actor in a different theater to pursue its own interests.

While I have not been briefed on our current classified assessments of adversary alignment, if confirmed, I will make it a priority to work with the intelligence community, the Joint Staff, the Services, and civilian leadership, to understand both the threat posed by adversary alignment, as well as the implications of this alignment for the Department in general, and on Joint Force sizing and shaping in particular.

5. Senator COTTON. Mr. Feinberg, will this require additional funding for the Department of Defense?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work with DOD components, Military Services, Joint Staff, and combatant commands to thoroughly understand the current capability and underlying requirements. I will also prioritize a line-by-line review of DOD spending to understand what missions this spending supports.

Along with these reviews, I will also leverage intelligence and collect views from civilian and military experts to understand the potential threats and approaches for managing those threats to assess potential funding implications.

#### DRONES

6. Senator COTTON. Mr. Feinberg, as evidenced in Ukraine, drones alone are not that decisive advantage to break out of a stalemate. Given that, what role do you believe drones and artificial intelligence (AI) have in our military?

Mr. FEINBERG. The conflict in Ukraine has demonstrated that the integration of emerging technologies such as drones and artificial intelligence (AI) will shape the future of warfighting and thus are essential tools for preserving the Joint Force's technological advantage over adversaries. I understand that rapid fielding of emerging technologies to enhance the lethality of our warfighters and reestablish deterrence is a key concern for the Secretary of Defense.

If confirmed, I will cooperate with stakeholders across the Department to ensure that warfighters can employ emerging technologies such as drones and AI to complement the full array of the Joint Force's capabilities. I also recognize that the Department can utilize AI for a range of use cases, from warfighting to business processes. If confirmed, I am committed to exploring how drones and AI can be used to quickly and responsibly respond to evolving threats and assure lethality in the face of changing battlefield conditions.

#### MUNITIONS

7. Senator COTTON. Mr. Feinberg, long lead item, critical munitions like the Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM), Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM), and Precision Strike Missile (PrSM) are required in the INDOPACOM fight. What other munitions do you consider critical for the INDOPACOM fight?

Mr. FEINBERG. Having a ready stockpile of munitions to deter and defeat in the Indo-Pacific is paramount to our success. The munitions that will enhance our lethality span the munitions capability portfolio including long-range precision strike packages, maritime strike, air to air, and missile defense. These capabilities include innovative, mass-produced weapons, hypersonic missiles, and a backbone of proven precision guided munitions.

If confirmed, I will ensure the Department continues to work across the Joint Force, combatant commands, and Services to develop requirements on a yearly basis in alignment with strategy and prioritize the implementation of these munitions.

8. Senator COTTON. Mr. Feinberg, what additional authorities from Congress do you believe you need to cut through bureaucratic red-tape and grow our production capabilities for critical munitions?

Mr. FEINBERG. Critical munitions are vital for deterring and defeating our adversaries. The Department must continue to seek authorization and appropriations from Congress in support of multi-year procurement efforts, including advanced procurement of long-lead items.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on developing more flexible authorities to ensure that we can surge weapons production and rebuild our military. Additionally, I will review the slate of existing authorities to determine whether there are additional authorities that the Department could leverage, and I will communicate back to the Congress, as appropriate.

#### AMERICA'S STRENGTHS

9. Senator COTTON. Mr. Feinberg, what are America's key advantages we should leverage in a contest with China?

Mr. FEINBERG. The United States has the strongest military in the history of the world. We will build on that advantageous position, by reviving the warrior ethos inside the Department, expanding and enhancing our capabilities, and standing by our Allies in the face of aggression by Communist China.

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR M. MICHAEL ROUNDS

##### DIAGNOSTIC TESTING TECHNOLOGY

10. Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Feinberg, almost 3 years ago the Department of Defense (DOD) estimated that the inability to detect and isolate electronic faults resulted in over 383,000 non-mission capable days each year and over \$5.5 billion in non-value-added sustainment costs. In response to this readiness and sustainment challenge, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) proposed funding for the purchase of a readily available, effective, and proven technology to address this issue. The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) fully supports this technology, and the fiscal year 2024 defense appropriation included \$35.2 million for it. My concern is that under the previous administration, the Army has, instead of acquiring this readily available, proven, and extremely cost-effective technology despite its powerful support from OSD and SASC, decided to continue to only study the issue. Meanwhile, the Navy has outright resisted acquisition of the technology. If confirmed, would you commit to following up with me on this technology?



Mr. FEINBERG. While I have not been briefed on the specific details of the Department's electronic faults efforts, I understand the importance of pursuing new technology to solve mission-critical sustainment challenges. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and the Services on this issue.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JONI K. ERNST

NAVY MEDICAL RESEARCH COMMAND VIROLOGY RESEARCH

11. Senator ERNST. Mr. Feinberg, the Navy Medical Research Command has funded and conducted research and surveillance in foreign locations such as Laos, Singapore, and Malaysia, including funding Laos bat virus research. Congress passed a law asking DOD to report on research labs in China and other foreign countries (section 252 of Public Law 118-31). The Office of Inspector General's (OIG) June 18, 2024 report, in response to that law, noted:

Mr. FEINBERG. "(U) Navy officials from the Office of Naval Research and Naval Medical Research Command did not respond with a completed questionnaire but provided a statement confirming they were unable to identify any research or experiments during the period under review that could have reasonably resulted in funds provided to the People's Republic of China and associated affiliates for research activities, or any foreign countries, for the enhancement of pathogens of pandemic potential" (emphasis added).

Some of the OIG questions the Navy did not answer, include the funding amount and details surrounding the study of pathogens in China or other foreign countries and the purposes for those studies. Those questions still warrant answers.

We have had difficulty getting responses from the previous administration on many issues of concern, including information on the DOD's involvement in bat research. Will you commit to ensuring full transparency and cooperation with congressional oversight, especially regarding the Navy's pandemic pathogen and bat virus research?

If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring transparency and cooperation with congressional oversight. I will make sure that the Department's research and development efforts are addressing the highest priorities, as determined by the President and the Secretary of Defense. I also commit to examining DOD's involvement in pandemic pathogen and bat virus research and related activities.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

ALASKA

12. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, in a 2018 interview, then Secretary of the Navy, Richard Spencer, said that the Navy "need[s] to have on-sea presence [in the Arctic] now that we have a blue water Arctic more times than not." He additionally pushed the Navy to look at "warm[ing] up Adak again," not only for additional training but also for naval sea and air facilities as well as bulk fuel capability. When Chinese and Russian naval vessels and air assets enter the Alaska Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), aircraft and ships must often travel long distances, which stretch sustainment and make it more difficult to keep a constant presence in the region where our adversaries are located. Will you commit to reviewing our Arctic posture and specifically pushing for a naval base and bulk fuel facilities at Adak Island to increase presence in the Arctic?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the Joint Force's posture globally—including in Alaska and the broader Arctic region—and the infrastructure necessary to support the Joint Force's global mission.

13. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, Alaska is the only U.S. State in the Arctic region. What advantages do you see in having multiple ports in the Aleutians and Western Alaska that can refuel U.S. Navy ships?

Mr. FEINBERG. Maintaining U.S. presence in the Arctic is key to restoring deterrence and ensuring defense of the homeland. Military at-sea refueling and commercial refueling arrangements enable nimble U.S. operations, heightening our maneuverability and operational readiness. The capabilities afforded by these refueling arrangements are supplemented by commercial ports like the Port of Alaska in Anchorage, which DOD has designated as a U.S. Commercial Strategic Seaport. If confirmed, I look forward to evaluating capability gaps in Alaska and the Arctic more broadly to ensure that the Joint Force has the posture and infrastructure it needs to fulfill its mission there.

14. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, in Alaska, we have seen joint Russian-Chinese air and naval exercises off our shores, incursions into our ADIZ and EEZ, and a Chinese spy balloon floating over our communities. In your opinion, what capabilities must advance to improve multi-domain awareness in Alaska to respond to and be a persistent presence in the Arctic, while Russia and China have developed capabilities to hold our Homeland at risk?

Mr. FEINBERG. Alaska plays an indispensable role in defending our homeland, and I support efforts to improve our capabilities to monitor the Arctic region across all domains. Ongoing efforts—undertaken in partnership with Canada—to modernize NORAD and enhance the binational command's ability to detect and monitor evolving threats are key to this this.

If confirmed, I look forward to exploring additional ground-and space-based sensors to further improve our sight picture in the region. Today, communicating in the Arctic can be a major hindrance to operating in the region, so examining enhancements to our communications and data architecture in the region, especially space-based communications, will be imperative to executing DOD's mission.

15. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, Alaska's importance as a strategic place is not only due to its location but because it forms the "Three Pillars of Military Might": 1) it acts as the cornerstone of missile defense by housing the majority of the Nation's ground based nuclear interceptors and many of the Nation's advanced radars; 2) by providing a strategic platform for expeditionary forces including the 11th Airborne Division (Arctic); and 3) being a hub for Air Combat Power where the largest concentration of fifth generation fighters in the world is located. Will you commit to visiting Alaska to understand the unique capabilities our State brings to deterrence?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and visiting Alaska to understand the unique capabilities Alaska brings to deterrence.

#### DEFENSE ACQUISITION REFORM

16. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, last year, Congress received the report of the Commission on Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) Reform—a comprehensive report that outlined issues with the Department of Defense's defense acquisition system. I plan to lead efforts to cut bureaucracy and speed up innovation in the Pentagon and defense technology sector and I believe the recommendations in this report are a crucial step in doing so. Many of the reforms in that report do not need congressional legislation to execute but rather can be enacted by the Department of Defense and you as Deputy Secretary of Defense, if confirmed. Will you commit to review the findings of that report and direct a Pentagon working group to begin implementation of the reform measures it outlined?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. I understand that under the previous Administration, the Department committed to implementing some of the recommendations made by the Commission on PPBE Reform. If confirmed, I look forward to further evaluating the Commission's findings and recommendations and to better understanding and shaping the Department's ongoing efforts in response.

I also recognize that many of the PPBE reform efforts may not require legislation to implement and acknowledge the importance of open communication between the Department and Congress. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and keeping you informed on these matters.

17. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, I am working with the Pentagon and through legislation to lead efforts that help innovative defense startups avoid the "Valley of Death" which results in long-procurement timelines and shuttered defense firms. Will you commit to work with me to fix this issue and to get feedback from non-traditional defense technology leaders and scholars to reform the Pentagon's processes?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. The Department needs to source and field capabilities from non-traditional vendors, including innovative startups and commercial industry, more quickly and at greater scale. In key technology areas like software, commercial industry has rapidly adjusted their development timelines to meet a fast-changing market, while DOD is still struggling to reframe its acquisition process from a hardware-centric to a software-centric approach. If confirmed, I will seek out feedback from non-traditional defense technology leaders and actively pursue new ideas and innovative approaches to deliver solutions to our warfighters more quickly.

18. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, will you commit to reviewing the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) as outlined in the PPBE Re-

form Commission report and provide Congress with updates as to the regulations that need to be removed or amended to speed up acquisition?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I am committed to streamlining and accelerating the acquisition process, recognizing its critical role in equipping our warfighters with the capabilities they need to maintain our national security. I am committed to thoroughly reviewing the DFARS through the lens of speed and efficiency, taking into account the Commission's findings. This review will be conducted with a sense of urgency, and, if confirmed, I commit to ensuring transparency, accountability, and cooperation with congressional oversight.

19. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, in my view, one of the most important findings of the PPBE commission report involved reviewing defense technology portfolios and budget line items to align them with capabilities and provide agile budgeting flexibility by consolidating budget line items. Do you agree that this idea will give the Pentagon more agility to identify and execute important programs at scale that are needed by the warfighter?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I am committed to further evaluating the findings and recommendations of the Commission on PPBE Reform and to working with Congress to improve the flexibility in the defense budgeting processes, which will include focusing on the consolidation of budget line items.

20. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, one of the most successful programs in the Pentagon the last several years has been the Space Development Agency (SDA), which has significantly reduced the time it takes to get satellite sensor systems into orbit cheaply and at scale. However, I am growing concerned that this program is going to be pulled into the slower Pentagon Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS), and potentially lose its technological edge. Will you commit to reviewing this program and helping Congress protect its current organizational configuration to enable scalable satellite launches?

Mr. FEINBERG. I agree that we must preserve the factors that have made the Space Development Agency (SDA) innovative and their established record of using a spiral development strategy to deliver new capabilities to meet documented Joint warfighter needs at scale, on time, and within cost margins. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing how the lessons learned from SDA's successes can inform the NDAA-directed "clean sheet" review of the JCIDS process and to developing a way ahead that preserves SDA's ability to rapidly deliver necessary, integrated capabilities for the Joint Force.

21. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, the Replicator Initiative started by your predecessor seems to be trending positively overall with certain exquisite capabilities already acquired. The goal is to scale these capabilities this year. If the Replicator Initiative is successful, there will likely be several lessons learned from it about the procurement process. How do you plan to incorporate lessons learned from Replicator into the rest of the DOD procurement process?

Mr. FEINBERG. My understanding is that the Replicator Initiative, through a whole of Department approach, has been able to accelerate processes that normally take the Department years to complete into only months. In partnership with the Vice Chairman and DOD components, if confirmed, I will work to identify Replicator's best practices. I believe it is important to continue pushing for the adoption and institutionalization of processes and practices that accelerate the delivery of capabilities to our warfighters.

#### CRITICAL MINERALS, NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT, AND ENERGY

22. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, during his term, President Joe Biden passed 70 executive orders that restricted Alaska's ability to extract its own natural resources despite an acute need for them on both commercial and national security grounds. These executive orders have slowed down or completely hindered resource extraction and critical infrastructure projects important not just to the State but to the Nation as a whole. On the first day of his presidency, January 20, 2025, President Trump signed an executive order entitled Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential. The order in part reads as follows:

"Section 3 Specific Agency Actions

a. The heads of all executive departments and agencies, including but not limited to the Secretary of the Interior; the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere; and the Secretary of the Army acting through the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Public Works, shall

exercise all lawful authority and discretion available to them and take all necessary steps to:

- (i) rescind, revoke, revise, amend, defer, or grant exemptions from any and all regulations, orders, guidance documents, policies, and any other similar agency actions that are inconsistent with the policy set forth in section 2 of this order, including but not limited to agency actions promulgated, issued, or adopted between January 20, 2021, and January 20, 2025; and
- (ii) prioritize the development of Alaska's LNG potential, including the permitting of all necessary pipeline and export infrastructure related to the Alaska LNG Project, giving due consideration to the economic and national security benefits associated with such development . . .

Section 3(d) in addition to the actions outlined in subsection (a) of this section, the Secretary of the Army, acting through the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, shall render all assistance requested by the Governor of Alaska to facilitate the clearing and maintenance of transportation infrastructure, consistent with applicable law. All such requests for assistance shall be transmitted to the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the Interior, and Assistant to the President for Economic Policy for approval prior to initiation.

Section 3(e) the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, under the direction of the Secretary of the Army, shall immediately review, revise, or rescind any agency action that may in any way hinder, slow or otherwise delay any critical project in the State of Alaska."

Will you commit fully to the intent of the President's executive order referenced above where the Department of the Army and the U.S Army Corps of Engineers will play a vital role?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will ensure I get a briefing from the Department of the Army on the scope and details of this initiative and ensure that the Department appropriately implements the President's Executive Order.

23. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, a number of important military construction (MILCON) projects are held up by overly burdensome environmental regulations. My home State of Alaska is particularly hard hit by these regulations as the building season is very short and the costs to build there extremely high. Will you commit to reviewing environmental regulations put in place by DOD to accelerate the pace of environmental reviews for critical MILCON projects and to let Congress know how it can help?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will evaluate DOD and Military Department National Environmental Policy Act regulations to streamline and accelerate the pace of environmental reviews for critical MILCON projects. I also commit to working with Congress to support the Department's ability to rebuild our military expeditiously.

24. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, one of the results of President Biden's energy policies and the "lock up" of my State through his executive orders is an energy emergency affecting our national security that is unfolding on some Alaska bases. I spoke to Secretary Hegseth recently about this issue and explained to him that there has been a number of instances where commanders of bases like Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) in Anchorage had to tell servicemembers and their families to turn-down their heat, unplug personal property, and turn-off certain critical systems that sustain the base. This was done to preserve electricity and avoid brown-outs in the region. Would U.S. national security be enhanced if there was a reliable source of clean-burning Alaskan natural gas available to supply the energy needs of these bases?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will ensure a thorough evaluation of energy resilience at our installations in Alaska and prioritize actions to mitigate shortfalls. While I cannot speak to the specifics of natural gas within the context of the national security paradigm yet, I understand the Department is evaluating actions that support the President's Executive Orders and, if confirmed, I would ensure the inclusion of natural gas is also evaluated as part of energy resilience of DOD installations.

25. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, will you commit to working with the State of Alaska and me to secure a reliable source of energy for Alaska military bases?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the State of Alaska, and you, to enhance the energy resilience of DOD installations.

## GOLDEN DOME FOR AMERICA

26. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, Billy Mitchell, the Father of the U.S. Air Force once said, "I believe . . . whoever controls Alaska controls the world. I think it is the most strategic place in the world." No other State but Alaska is strategically located to provide such a high level of Homeland Defense. At Fort Greely, the 49th Missile Defense Battalion provides our Nation's first line of defense, tasked to defend against the threat of an intercontinental ballistic missile attack, command of 40 of the Nation's 44 ballistic missile interceptors, and reception of data from the nearby Long Range Discrimination Radar (LRDR). Fort Greely will soon house the new Next Generation Interceptor (NGI) missiles, but the program for this system has stalled due to high cost overruns and manufacturing delays. The NGI will be an essential part of our national ballistic missile system. Will you commit to reviewing the NGI program, if confirmed, and keep Congress informed of what resources are required to field the missile on time?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work with the Missile Defense Agency, other DOD components, and the Military Services to advance our Nation's homeland missile defense capabilities—to include the Next Generation Interceptor (NGI) program—in order to deliver on the President's vision and Executive Order for homeland defense. The NGI program is a top priority and I commit to working with the Congress to ensure it is resourced for success.

27. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, Alaska is strategic not only for its geographic location but also because of its concentration of over 100 fifth generation fighters (the highest concentration in the world) as well as it being home to the 11th Airborne Division, the Nation's preeminent Arctic combat unit. If a war occurred in the INDOPACOM area of responsibility (AOR), forces in Alaska would almost certainly be part of that fight and therefore would also be potentially targeted in their home bases. Do you believe that President Trump's "Golden Dome for America" should include Alaska as a critical site to be defended from missile attack given the facts stated above?

Mr. FEINBERG. I fully support President Trump's Executive Order to create a Golden Dome for America. The need for a next-generation missile defense shield to protect Americans could not be more urgent, and it aligns with one of the top priorities the Secretary has set for the Defense Department: the need to reestablish deterrence capabilities to protect our U.S. homeland borders and skies against foreign coercion and aggression. All Americans deserve a similar degree of protection against the catastrophic missile threats of our potential adversaries. In its development of defensive architectures, the Department will consider all key and potentially key locations, including Alaska, to ensure we meet the intent of the executive order and secure the Nation.

## BUDGET

28. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Feinberg, since World War II, U.S. defense spending has only dropped below 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) four times. Right now we are barely spending over that threshold and the services are paying the heavy price for it in readiness. Senator Wicker's "Peace Through Strength" Act seeks to increase defense spending from 3 percent to 5 percent over time. Do you commit to protect and help raise defense spending for high priority projects like shipbuilding, industrial base improvement, Golden Dome, etc.?

Mr. FEINBERG. I commit to protect defense spending for high priority projects, including shipbuilding, industrial base improvements, and Golden Dome for America, if confirmed. I will also focus on ending wasteful spending and ensuring that all the funds Congress provides to the Department of Defense are wisely spent to address the President's priorities and provide our warfighters with the tools they need to keep our country safe.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOMMY TUBERVILLE

## THE REPLICATOR INITIATIVE

29. Senator TUBERVILLE. Mr. Feinberg, the Secretary of Defense recently outlined 17 critical investment areas, including unmanned systems, which should be exempt from budget cuts within the Department of Defense. The Replicator Initiative represents a significant investment in this domain. If confirmed, can you commit to working to ensure the continuity of the Replicator Initiative and working to exempt it from any budget cuts?

Mr. FEINBERG. The Department must do more to deliver capabilities for warfighters, at scale, on the most critical operational problems. My understanding is that the Replicator initiative has focused on two critical areas: Replicator-1 is focused on delivering thousands of all-domain attritable autonomous systems to INDOPACOM to counter the pacing threat posed by China; and Replicator-2 is focusing on countering the threat posed by small unmanned aerial systems to our most critical installations and force concentrations. Both of these operational problems remain pressing challenges and, if confirmed, I will continue to ensure the Department focuses on and prioritizes the budget for delivering innovative capabilities to warfighters in line with the President's policies and the Secretary's priorities of rebuilding our military and reestablishing deterrence.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES

30. Senator BUDD. Mr. Feinberg, your predecessor focused on the Replicator initiative, led by the Defense Innovation Unit, to rapidly field thousands of unmanned and autonomous systems. Do you believe this initiative to be a success?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work with DOD components, Military Services, Joint Staff, and combatant commands to thoroughly understand the current capability and underlying requirements associated with the Replicator initiative. I will also prioritize a line-by-line review of DOD spending to understand what missions this spending supports. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department focuses on delivering innovative capabilities to warfighters in line with the President's policies and the Secretary's priorities of rebuilding our military and reestablishing deterrence.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

31. Senator BUDD. Mr. Feinberg, if confirmed, how would you plan to ensure that leading edge AI capabilities continue to be prioritized across the military services' intelligence programs, such as Project Maven?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Officer, the combatant commands, and Military Departments as well as the Deputy Director of National Intelligence, to appropriately prioritize leading-edge AI capabilities that can bring increased lethality or efficiency in operations. We will continue to mature and expand the operationalization of key efforts, such as Project Maven, to improve the accuracy, speed, and precision of intelligence support across the full range of DOD missions.

32. Senator BUDD. Mr. Feinberg, if confirmed, can you commit to ensuring that we are not only acquiring but scaling effective leading edge AI capabilities across the Department of Defense when feasible?

Mr. FEINBERG. I will prioritize the Department's efforts to rapidly deliver leading edge AI capabilities at scale, if confirmed. When solutions demonstrate high return on investment in pilots and experiments, it is important to quickly integrate them into both user workflows and the broader architecture. Scalability has historically been a challenge in DOD, but I will focus on creating the right collaborations between industry, users, and program offices to develop and implement transition plans that allow the entire force to effectively scale and sustain the gains leading edge AI can bring to the Department.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ERIC SCHMITT

CRITICAL MINERALS

33. Senator SCHMITT. Mr. Feinberg, China has gained an outsized control of the mining and refinement of rare earth minerals that are crucial to almost all aspects of American manufacturing and defense technologies. What steps do you and the administration of President Donald Trump feel can and should be taken by the Defense Department, directly and through procurement, to better develop domestic sources of critical materials for national and economic security and reduce our dependency on foreign supplies?

Mr. FEINBERG. The U.S. Defense Industrial Base (DIB) faces challenges from China's presence in, or control over, crucial aspects of our strategic and critical materials supply chains that are not just limited to rare earths but also includes a significant number of critical minerals such as graphite, arsenic, tantalum, and others

required by the defense industrial base. Additionally, there are challenges primarily in processing the raw material through each stage of the mineral value chain—from exploratory drilling through manufacturing. It is my understanding that the Department has worked with industry to identify and mitigate vulnerabilities throughout our critical mineral supply chains, and the Department has invested heavily to strategically revitalize critical capabilities in domestic mining, recycling, and processing industries in order to establish both short- and long-term solutions.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Department expands these efforts and utilizes all available authorities, such as purchase commitments, to secure and stabilize domestic supply chains and eliminate our reliance on China. I also understand the importance of stockpiling as a buffer in case of a national emergency, and, if confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Department has the necessary robust National Defense Stockpile, not only as an effective insurance policy against disruption, but also as a deterrent against adversarial activity.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

34. Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Feinberg, during our office call we discussed the Women Peace and Security (WPS) law and its implementation at DOD. It mandates that women be included in all aspects of our national security, including conflict resolution and peace negotiations. How does security cooperation under WPS provide an operational and a strategic advantage to the United States and our allies?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing DOD's implementation of the WPS law to fully understand how it provides an operational and strategic advantage to the United States and our Allies. I am committed to working with you on this important initiative.

35. Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Feinberg, how do these programs contribute to deterring the People's Republic of China, preventing trafficking of women and girls at the border and countering violent extremism?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing DOD's implementation of the WPS law to fully understand how it contributes to deterring the People's Republic of China. I am committed to working with you on this important initiative.

36. Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Feinberg, can you commit to protecting these programs at DOD, and keeping in touch with me about its implementation?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will support the ongoing review of all assistance programs and assess DOD's ongoing implementation of the 2017 WPS Act. If confirmed, I commit to transparency and look forward to working with Congress on these efforts.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AT THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

37. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, according to Associated Press reporting, two senior United States Agency for International Development (USAID) security officials were dismissed for trying to prevent Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) from unlawfully accessing classified information in restricted areas. This alarming development shows a dangerous disregard for security protocols. With DOGE teams now at the Department of Defense, I am very concerned this pattern could threaten national security. As the DOD's chief operating and management officer, will you ensure that DOD civilians and security personnel are not punished for protecting classified and sensitive information from unauthorized access?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am unaware of the reporting that is referenced in your question. I am committed to protecting Department of Defense (DoD) sensitive and classified information. I understand that the President maintains ultimate authority over controlled and classified information access within and across the executive branch and this authority as been exercised for the last sixty years through a series of Executive Orders.

If confirmed, I will support the Secretary of Defense in implementing Presidential directives and ensuring appropriate access to DOD information aligns with the Administration's priorities. I will also ensure that all DOD personnel are empowered and equipped to fulfill the essential missions of enabling access to and safeguarding

sensitive and classified information in accordance with all applicable Presidential direction, information security laws, regulations, and DOD policies.

#### REPLICATOR INITIATIVE

38. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, the Replicator Initiative has accelerated the rapid acquisition and fielding of low-cost, autonomous drones at scale to address warfighter needs in the Indo-Pacific and bolster deterrence. If confirmed, will you continue to support the Replicator initiative?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work with DOD components, Military Services, Joint Staff, and combatant commands to thoroughly understand the current capability and underlying requirements associated with the Replicator initiative. I will also prioritize a line-by-line review of DOD spending to understand what missions this spending supports. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department focuses on delivering innovative capabilities to warfighters in line with the President's policies and the Secretary's priorities of rebuilding our military and reestablishing deterrence.

39. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, what is your plan to build on the progress of programs like Replicator that focus on scaling the capabilities our military needs to deter Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. FEINBERG. My understanding is that the Replicator Initiative, through a whole of Department approach, has been able to accelerate processes that normally take the Department years to complete into only months. In partnership with the Vice Chairman and DOD components, if confirmed, I will work to identify Replicator's best practices. I believe it is important to continue pushing for the adoption and institutionalization of processes and practices that accelerate the delivery of capabilities to our warfighters.

#### UNITED STATES INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND UNFUNDED PRIORITIES LIST

40. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, successive administrations have identified China as the pacing threat and the Indo-Pacific as the priority theater. However, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) provided Congress with \$11 billion dollars in unfunded priorities in fiscal year 2025. The list included missile defense systems, electronic warfare and autonomous capabilities, and critical innovation programs. This was the largest unfunded list of any combatant command. If confirmed, how will you ensure INDOPACOM's requirements are being met to address the pacing threat in the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will carry out Secretary Hegseth's crystal-clear direction that we are going to stand strong with our Allies and partners to deter aggression by Communist China in the Indo-Pacific. As he stated to Ukraine Defense Contact Group on February 12, 2025, "The U.S. is prioritizing deterring war with China in the Pacific, recognizing the reality of scarcity, and making the resourcing tradeoffs to ensure deterrence does not fail."

41. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, are you open to reforms that would give INDOPACOM more of a say in the budgeting process?

Mr. FEINBERG. While it is my understanding that the Combatant Commands have full representation in each of the Department's planning, programming, and budgeting forums including the Deputy's Management Action Group (DMAG), I commit, if confirmed, to maintaining open lines of communications with the INDOPACOM Commander to ensure I always receive his best military advice—including on the budget.

#### WHOLE-OF-DEPARTMENT ACQUISITION REFORM

42. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, your predecessor leveraged the position of Deputy Secretary of Defense to accelerate acquisition reform and consolidate innovation initiatives across the Department. What whole-of-department reforms would you implement to streamline acquisition processes and deliver critical capabilities faster?

Mr. FEINBERG. It is my understanding the Department has undertaken a series of acquisition reform initiatives to deliver capabilities to the warfighter faster, to include adoption of the Adaptive Acquisition Framework and greater utilization of newer methodologies such as other transaction authorities and commercial solutions openings. Additionally, acquisition reform must include reviewing the current processes surrounding requirements, PPBE reform recommendations, and industry weaknesses. If confirmed, I will review the effectiveness of current initiatives and consider options to further refine and improve the Department's acquisition efforts.



43. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, as China seeks to undermine U.S. security in the Indo-Pacific, how will you tailor reforms to impact capabilities needed in the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility?

Mr. FEINBERG. China's pursuit of military modernization and its increasingly assertive actions in the Indo-Pacific pose a direct challenge to U.S. security and the regional balance of power. To effectively counter this threat, I am committed to pursuing acquisition reforms to deliver the capabilities needed in the Indo-Pacific Area of Responsibility (AOR) with unprecedented speed and agility. I will prioritize the development and acquisition of capabilities specifically designed to address the operational challenges posed by China in the Indo-Pacific, such as resilient networking, and advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems. If confirmed, I will ensure acquisition decisions consider the need to support a distributed force posture in the Indo-Pacific, in turn enabling us to operate effectively across vast distances and challenging environments.

#### BOLSTERING DETERRENCE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

44. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, in your opening statement, you acknowledge the immense challenge China poses as they expand their military and become "more emboldened and aggressive each day." What specific policies or actions are you planning to bolster deterrence in the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. FEINBERG. As the President has directed, the United States will ensure Peace through Strength. To meet the challenges posed by China will require significant and persistent investments in how we resource the joint force. That will require improvements in our defense industrial base and the Department's acquisition process, as well as intangibles such as how rapidly we are able to field new technologies. In addition, the Department's non-military activities must serve its laser focus on readiness, lethality, and warfighting.

#### ALLIES AND PARTNERS

45. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, our strong network of allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific is one of our greatest advantages and a key part of our National Defense Strategy. Maintaining these important relationships requires adequate budgeting for joint and multilateral exercises and training, which bolsters military readiness and deterrence. Given the constrained fiscal environment, how do you plan to prioritize service campaign funding for multilateral exercises and training in the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will carry out Secretary Hegseth's direction that we are going to stand strong with our Allies and partners to deter aggression by Communist China in the Indo-Pacific. Multilateral exercises and training with our partners in the Indo-Pacific are a high priority as they are among the most visible and effective ways to demonstrate our resolve.

#### PROBATIONARY EMPLOYEES

46. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, the Department of Defense has stated it is "re-evaluating the probationary workforce" and plans to terminate approximately 5,400 probationary employees. Given that probationary workers are often younger professionals or those filling mission-critical technical roles, these cuts could have long-term implications for DOD's talent pipeline and operational readiness. Given that many probationary employees often represent the next generation of DOD leadership, how will you ensure these cuts do not disproportionately undermine the Department's ability to retain and develop young talent?

Mr. FEINBERG. Every person is important, and reorganizing is always hard. It is important that the Department gets this right. If confirmed, I will assess the potential impact of workforce reductions on DOD's talent pipeline to ensure that decisions align with mission readiness and long-term talent development, while also meeting the President's goals for reshaping the Government's workforce.

47. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, many probationary employees serve in highly technical or hard-to-fill positions critical to mission success. What specific measures will you implement to prevent the loss of expertise in these areas?

Mr. FEINBERG. Civilian employees play a vital role in supporting DOD, many serving in highly technical roles. If confirmed, I will evaluate the Department's approach to workforce reductions to ensure it retains critical technical expertise central to accomplishing the Department's objectives.

48. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, given the national security importance of building a strong civilian talent pipeline, will you commit to preserving pathway

programs and hiring authorities to ensure young professionals continue to enter and advance within the DOD workforce?

Mr. FEINBERG. It is critical that the Department continue to attract talented young professionals in the future. If confirmed, I will review DOD's workforce development strategies and authorities and its efforts to maintain a strong pipeline of young professionals in mission-critical areas.

#### OTHER TRANSACTION AUTHORITIES AND SOLE SOURCE CONTRACTS

49. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, in your hearing, you stated that you plan to enhance the Department's use of Other Transaction Authorities (OTAs) and sole-source contracts to better support opportunities for small businesses to scale within DOD. What specific next steps will you take to implement this strategy, and how will you ensure these efforts translate into tangible opportunities for small businesses?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will engage with DOD Components to enhance the effective use of OTAs, and where applicable using the statutory authority for follow-on production contracts to attract small businesses and non-traditional defense contractors to support expansion of the defense industrial base. We will promote these strategies by ensuring the acquisition workforce is aware and informed through policy, guidance, and training to incentivize appropriate use of this strategy to help achieve DOD small business goals.

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PROGRAM REVIEW INITIATIVE

50. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, during your hearing, you stated that if confirmed, you and your team would be conducting "line-by-line" reviews of DOD programs. Can you provide specific details on the scope, criteria, and timeline for these reviews?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, one of my first priorities will be a line-by-line review of DOD budget programs, with a focus on identifying efficiencies and to address potential fraud, waste, and abuse that arises when executing the largest discretionary budget in Federal Government. I will also leverage my position as the Co-chair of the Deputy's Management Action Group to make sure programs are aligned with the President's policies and the Secretary's priorities.

51. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, additionally, what mechanisms will you put in place to ensure regular updates to Congress on your findings and any resulting policy or budgetary changes?

Mr. FEINBERG. It is important that Congress and DOD have reliable, useful, and timely financial information—and this can't happen without a trusting and transparent relationship. If confirmed, I promise to work closely with the Comptroller and Congress to make sure everyone is informed about DOD's financial needs, priorities, and potential issues. Defense programs often involve long development timelines and significant financial commitments, and regular communication enables Congress to understand these long-term plans and provide stable funding.

#### DEFENSE INNOVATION UNIT RESTRUCTURING

52. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Feinberg, recent reports suggest that the Pentagon is considering restructuring and potentially consolidating the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office (CDAO), the Strategic Capabilities Office (SCO), and other technology-focused entities. If this initiative moves forward, will you commit to regularly engaging with Congress and providing timely updates on the restructuring process, including its impact on ongoing programs, workforce, and mission effectiveness?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will examine the current structure to best determine how to align efforts to achieve maximum effect and efficiency. My focus will be on ensuring the Department can accelerate the delivery of the most lethal, advanced technologies and capabilities to the warfighters. I also recognize the importance of a transparent relationship between the Department and Congress, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress on the matter.

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

##### AGREEMENTS

53. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, have you, in any professional or personal capacity, signed or agreed to sign a non-disclosure agreement, confidentiality agree-

ment, confidential disclosure agreement, proprietary information agreement, non-disparagement agreement, and/or secrecy agreement and for what reasons did you do so?

Mr. FEINBERG. Over the course of my more than 30-year career in investing, I may have signed agreements relating to non-disclosure, proprietary information or confidentiality/secrecy matters from time to time for the purposes of obtaining information necessary to evaluate a potential investment. I do not recall signing agreements relating to non-disparagement although such clauses may have been contained within larger agreements that I may have signed in connection with an investment or in connection with ordinary course Cerberus personnel matters.

54. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, have you, in any professional or personal capacity, agreed to pay, paid, or receive payment or services in conjunction with any of the aforementioned instances?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not recall any such payments although it is possible that in connection with signing such an agreement in connection with due diligence on a potential investment Cerberus (but not me personally) may have received a payment for expense reimbursement relating to the conduct of such due diligence.

55. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if you have in any professional or personal capacity, agreed to pay, paid, or receive payment or services in conjunction with any of the aforementioned instances, please provide a breakdown of the amount(s) agreed to pay, paid, or received and an explanation of services rendered and include a timeline of when any of these agreements, payments, or services rendered occurred.

Mr. FEINBERG. Given my role as CEO, the lengthy time span of my career, and my extremely limited personal involvement in this level of business matters, I cannot provide such a list. I can confirm that to the best of my knowledge neither I nor Cerberus have ever made or received any such payments in connection with any matter relating to a crime, an alleged crime, a securities law violation, a regulatory or similar matter.

#### RETALIATION AND PROTECTING WHISTLEBLOWERS

56. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you believe that servicemembers, civilians, grantees, and contractors should be protected from any form of retaliation for coming forward about an illegal order, sexual assault or harassment, negligence, misconduct, or any other concern that they wish to raise?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. I believe persons who report allegations of wrongdoing, such as sexual assault, should be protected from retaliation.

57. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, have you ever retaliated against any individual for coming forward about an illegal order, sexual assault or harassment, negligence, misconduct, or any other concern that they wish to raise?

Mr. FEINBERG. No, I have not.

58. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if you are confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, will you commit to protecting whistleblowers?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to the protection of whistleblowers.

59. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will you protect whistleblowers?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department provides all the protections to which whistleblowers are entitled under law.

#### CIVILIAN HARM

60. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you agree that one difference between the United States and its potential adversaries is the greater value that the U.S. Government puts on protecting human life and liberty at home and abroad?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, I do.

61. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what is your understanding of title 10 U.S.C. section 184, which established the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence?

Mr. FEINBERG. I understand the Section 184 requires DOD to establish the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence (CP CoE).

62. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, the U.S. military has spent many years working to improve its ability to prevent and mitigate civilian harm without sacrificing lethality—including through the development of the DOD Instruction on Civilian

Harm under the first Trump administration, which I commend. These efforts received bipartisan support from Congress and grew out of a recognition from the U.S. military itself that, after over 2 decades of U.S. wars, warfighters needed better tools and trustworthy systems to prevent civilian harm, uphold U.S. values, and prevent the moral injury and psychological trauma that too often comes with deadly mistakes. The Army has played a critical role in these efforts by serving as the joint proponent for civilian harm mitigation and response (CHMR) and housing the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence (CPCOE), which provides direct support to operational combatant commands on civilian harm issues. The CPCOE has also been enshrined in U.S. law via the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023. If confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, will you commit to continued Army leadership on civilian harm issues, including housing and resourcing the CPCOE?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary of the Army to ensure that the Department does its part to prevent and mitigate civilian harm, including with respect to the CPOE.

63. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what do you understand to be your roles and responsibilities regarding civilian harm mitigation and response?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I look forward to working with other Department leaders to prevent and mitigate civilian harm in a manner that advances American interests, consistent with relevant statutory obligations.

64. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what do you understand to be the importance of mitigating civilian harm in military operations?

Mr. FEINBERG. High rates of civilian harm in previous conflicts have led to limitations on U.S. freedom of action and allowed adversaries to recruit insurgents, putting our troops at risk.

65. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you commit to supporting and protecting the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I look forward to working with other Department leaders to prevent and mitigate civilian harm in a manner that advances American interests, consistent with relevant statutory obligations.

66. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will you prevent and mitigate civilian harm?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I look forward to working with other Department leaders to prevent and mitigate civilian harm in a manner that advances American interests, consistent with relevant statutory obligations.

67. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you commit to supporting and implementing the Civilian Harm Mitigation Response and Action plan (CHMR-AP)?

Mr. FEINBERG. I understand that the CHMR-AP is in its final year of implementation. If confirmed, I will continue evaluate DOD policies that prevent and mitigate civilian harm.

68. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you believe that our troops are at higher risk for retribution as the number of civilian deaths from U.S. military operations or U.S.-led military operations increases?

Mr. FEINBERG. High rates of civilian harm in previous conflicts have led to limitations on U.S. freedom of action and allowed adversaries to recruit insurgents, putting our troops at risk.

#### BLAST OVERPRESSURE

69. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you commit to protecting servicemembers from blast overpressure and increase their options for seeking care after being exposed?

Mr. FEINBERG. Protecting our servicemembers, maintaining their health and readiness, and ensuring they have access to the health care they need will always be a priority, if confirmed.

70. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what steps will you take to protect servicemembers from blast overpressure and increase their options for seeking care after being exposed?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I look forward to learning about the Department's efforts to establish world-class traumatic brain injury (TBI) specialty clinics and com-

prehensive interdisciplinary centers of excellence for TBI and brain health, available to all servicemembers diagnosed with brain injury or related illness. My understanding is that these centers are already providing innovative, interdisciplinary care.

71. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how do you plan to work with the Department of Veterans Affairs to make sure that servicemembers, veterans, and their families are aware of the risks of blast overpressure and traumatic brain injury?

Mr. FEINBERG. It is vital that the entire military community recognizes the seriousness of brain injuries and has the knowledge needed to prevent exposure, identify symptoms, and access the required treatment for traumatic brain injury. If confirmed, I commit to strengthening the collaboration between DOD and Department of Veterans Affairs and will continue to support the Military Health System's awareness efforts that have helped servicemembers, retirees, and their families recognize symptoms and seek appropriate care.

72. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you support establishing logs for soldiers on blast overpressure exposure and traumatic brain injury?

Mr. FEINBERG. I support tracking individual exposure to ensure that the servicemembers' health and well-being remains a top priority for the Department.

73. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you support requiring neurocognitive assessments of soldiers annually, before they begin training to establish a baseline, and before they leave the military to determine when their change in cognitive health over time?

Mr. FEINBERG. I recognize the importance of tracking cognitive health over the course of servicemembers' careers. My understanding is the Department has taken steps to establish baseline testing for all accessing servicemembers, and, if confirmed, I will meet with experts in the Department to understand the Department's efforts to establish a DOD-wide cognitive monitoring program.

74. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will you address the links between blast overpressure exposure and increased risks of suicide?

Mr. FEINBERG. The Department should continue to study the connection between blast exposure and mental health to best treat our servicemembers. If confirmed, I will meet with experts at the Department to understand the Department's efforts to establish a DOD-wide cognitive monitoring program so that cognitive health can be assessed and enhanced throughout the lifecycle of the Warfighter and mitigate the effects of Blast Overpressure.

75. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you support addressing the risks of blast overpressure to servicemembers through the swift implementation of sections 721 through section 725 of the Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work to understand how the Department is complying with congressional requirements, particularly on such vital issues. It is my understanding that DOD has already initiated efforts to implement the provisions, and, if confirmed, I will closely monitor implementation of all requirements.

#### RIGHT-TO-REPAIR

76. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you believe giving the Department of Defense access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could advance the Department of Defense's readiness?

Mr. FEINBERG. The Department of Defense should procure the necessary data and associated license rights to enable repair of its own equipment. If confirmed, I will direct a review of the Department's internal policies regarding the acquisition of technical data rights and the impact on readiness.

77. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you believe giving the Department of Defense access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could help reduce the Department of Defense's repair and sustainment costs?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will direct a review of the Department's internal policies regarding the acquisition of technical data rights and the impact on repair and sustainment costs.

78. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will you ensure servicemembers who are stationed abroad can timely and cost-effectively repair equipment that is damaged, especially in a contested logistics environment?

Mr. FEINBERG. Secretary Hegseth has called for the Department to rebuild our military by matching threats to capabilities. Critical elements of this effort are reviving our defense industrial base and leveraging ally and partner capabilities around the globe. While I do not yet know the specifics, I understand the Department has been exploring multiple efforts to leverage the repair infrastructure of Allies and partners in critical theaters in addition to fostering the U.S. industrial base to optimize and sustain U.S. capabilities more quickly. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about specific efforts to ensure that our capabilities can be sustained at the speed of relevance to strengthen deterrence and ensure lethality.

79. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if you are confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, will you commit to including right-to-repair/technical data rights clauses in acquisition contracts that the Department of Defense enters into?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I am committed to carefully reviewing the Department's current policies and practices regarding right-to-repair and the acquisition of the necessary data and data technical data rights under acquisition contracts. The Department must explore how best to leverage right-to-repair and technical data rights to enhance control costs and competition. My goal, if confirmed, is to ensure our acquisition strategies effectively support the warfighter while promoting a healthy and robust industrial base.

80. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if you are confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, will you commit to ensuring contractors deliver technical data rights to the Department of Defense when their contract requires or allows it?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that the Department's acquisition officials track assiduously the delivery of the data that our contractors are contractually required to deliver and ensure that our officials take appropriate enforcement actions if the data is not provided.

81. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if you are confirmed as Deputy Secretary of Defense, will you commit to understanding the cost of not having the right-to-repair/technical data rights for the Department of Defense's equipment through an assessment, the results of which you would make public for review by Congress and the Department of Government Efficiency?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will direct a review on the cost and readiness impacts of not having rights-to-repair and technical data rights.

#### LIGADO NETWORKS

82. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how much did Cerberus invest in Ligado Networks?

Mr. FEINBERG. Cerberus invested a total of over \$1.2 billion in various Ligado debt and equity during its ownership, including debt and equity securities that were sold in the market from time to time over the full duration of Cerberus' investment.

83. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, when did Cerberus begin investing in Ligado Networks?

Mr. FEINBERG. January 2015.

84. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, is Cerberus Ligado's largest creditor?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

85. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, does Cerberus have a path to own Ligado in future years?

Mr. FEINBERG. It is my understanding that based upon preliminary agreements with stakeholders in Ligado's pending chapter 11 case, it is contemplated that all of Ligado's pre-petition funded debt (except certain amounts repaid or "rolled up" through Ligado's debtor-in-possession facility approved by the Bankruptcy Court) will be converted to equity and existing equity interests will be retained, all in their relative order of priority. Consequently, if a plan of reorganization is approved on this basis, funds and accounts managed by Cerberus would own non-controlling equity interests in Ligado post-bankruptcy capital structure. If a plan is not approved and consummated, and Ligado's assets are liquidated, then Cerberus would simply receive its pro rata share of proceeds and no longer own any interests in Ligado.

86. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, Ligado is currently engaged in a lawsuit with the Department of Defense over claims that the company received for payments related to Ligado's rights to spectrum space. Will Cerberus benefit or be made whole

on its investment if the Department of Defense settles the lawsuit and pays Ligado \$4 billion or more?

Mr. FEINBERG. As a creditor of Ligado, Cerberus would most likely receive some portion of the settlement proceeds. Neither Cerberus nor other creditors would be made whole on their investments with a settlement of \$4 billion.

87. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you believe DOD has engaged in regulatory obstruction regarding L-band spectrum access?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have sufficient information or facts to form an opinion, and I do not understand what is meant by “regulatory obstruction.” As I understand it, the current lawsuit is in its early phases and no discovery has been conducted as to DOD’s actions relating to Ligado.

88. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you believe DOD’s actions regarding spectrum access have financially harmed Ligado or Cerberus?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have sufficient information or facts to form an opinion, and I do not understand what is meant by “regulatory obstruction.” As I understand it, the current lawsuit is in its early phases and no discovery has been conducted as to DOD’s actions relating to Ligado.

89. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, my colleague, Senator Deb Fischer, recently said “DOD losing access to its spectrum bans entirely, which is what vacating or clearing spectrum means, comes with huge risks and will end up costing us more. Replacing national security systems, if that is even possible, would cost hundreds of billions of dollars, and we all know it would take decades to be able to finish.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Mr. FEINBERG. I understand the importance of spectrum to our military and to achieving the objectives of the President and the Secretary of Defense. I agree that loss of military access to an entire band will carry significant risk, including cost. The details depend on which bands and which missions are at issue. This requires assessments of operational impact and identification of comparable spectrum to which systems will relocate, as required by law. I strongly believe we need spectrum to defend our country.

I also acknowledge commercial use of spectrum is needed to develop the technologies that will defend our country. To me, sharing is the best solution; however, we have to make sure that sharing can be achieved without risk to national security and homeland defense capabilities.

90. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, my colleague Senator Mike Rounds has said that he will oppose any spectrum action that includes the 3.1–3.45 GHz segment, currently used by the Defense Department. Where do you stand on this issue?

Mr. FEINBERG. I understand the importance of spectrum to our military and to achieving the objectives of the President and the Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving further briefings on this topic and will work to ensure the Department has the spectrum access necessary to achieve national security and homeland defense objectives.

91. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you commit to recusing yourself from any involvement in the lawsuit Ligado has brought against the Department of Defense?

Mr. FEINBERG. My Ethics Agreement and existing laws and policies set forth my recusal requirements. I will ensure that I have a robust screening process in place to help implement these recusals. I can pledge to you that I will be mindful of not only the legal requirements that govern my conduct, but also of the need to ensure that the public has no reason to question my impartiality, and I will consult with the Department’s ethics officials should such issues arise.

92. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how did you divest from your interest in Ligado?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, consistent with my Ethics Agreement, I will divest all of my interests in Cerberus Capital Management, L.P., which will include any interest in Ligado.

93. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you recuse yourself from any matters impacting Ligado?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, consistent with my Ethics Agreement, I will divest all of my interests in Cerberus Capital Management, L.P., which will include any interest in Ligado.

94. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you recuse yourself from spectrum decisions?

Mr. FEINBERG. My Ethics Agreement and existing laws and policies set forth my recusal requirements. I will ensure that I have a robust screening process in place to help implement these recusals. I can pledge to you that I will be mindful of not only the legal requirements that govern my conduct, but also of the need to ensure that the public has no reason to question my impartiality, and I will consult with the Department's ethics officials should such issues arise.

#### MANAGING THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE

95. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, the Trump administration has removed a number of probationary employees across the Federal Government. Many of these probationary employees were recently promoted or hired to fulfill urgently needed gaps in U.S. capabilities. Why should Congress provide the Department of Defense expedited or additional hiring authorities if they will be disregarded without any public justification or consultation with Congress?

Mr. FEINBERG. The Department benefits from flexibility in accomplishing its mission. If confirmed, I will work with DOD components and the Military Services to assess the gaps in U.S. capabilities and review DOD's legal authorities for workforce management to ensure decisions align with mission readiness and mission success, while also meeting the President's goals for reshaping the Government's workforce.

96. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, press reports indicate DOD has paused four trainings, including harassment prevention and No Fear Act training. Do you support harassment prevention training?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes, I support harassment prevention training. Harassing behaviors have no place in our military and undercut the cohesion and unity we need in our Total Force to achieve our critical defense missions.

97. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what is your understanding of the purpose of Federal whistleblower protection laws?

Mr. FEINBERG. Whistleblowers perform an important service by reporting what they reasonably believe to be evidence of waste, fraud, and abuse. Whistleblower protection laws exist to ensure that whistleblowers may report freely concerning issues of fraud, waste, and abuse without fear of retaliation and/or reprisal.

98. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, have you ever been accused of retaliating against a whistleblower?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

99. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memorandum called "Guidance on Agency RIF [reduction in force] and Reorganization Plans Requested by Implementing The President's 'Department of Government Efficiency' Workforce Optimization Initiative" on February 26, 2025. The memo outlines phases for which agencies will submit agency reductions in force and reorganization plans. Is the Department of Defense required to comply with this OMB memo?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will ensure I get a briefing on the scope of the OMB memo and ensure that the Department appropriately implements the underlying Executive Order.

100. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if the Department of Defense is not required to comply with the OMB memo, has the Department been given a similar directive by anyone in the Administration or within the Department's leadership?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am not aware of similar directives the Department may have received. If confirmed, I will ensure I get a briefing on Department efforts concerning workforce reductions.

101. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will the Department of Defense ensure that any reductions in force preserve military preparedness and national security?

Mr. FEINBERG. Civilian employees have a vital role in support of warfighter readiness. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department takes a deliberate approach to any workforce shaping decisions to strengthen the Department's ability to support the National Defense Strategy.

102. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will the Department of Defense conduct a review pursuant to title 10 USC section 129a?



Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will fully support conducting an appropriate analysis prior to any reductions of DOD's civilian workforce.

103. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will the Department of Defense ensure transparency and inform Congress about the findings of the review conducted pursuant to title 10 USC section 129a?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work with the Department's Legislative Affairs team to determine the best method to communicate information and facilitate transparency.

#### RULE OF LAW

104. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, Secretary of Defense Peter Hegseth said he removed the Judge Advocate Generals (JAG) for the Army, Navy, and Air Force so they would not "be roadblocks to anything that happens." What do you understand to be the role of Judge Advocate Generals for commanders and the military?

Mr. FEINBERG. I understand that the Judge Advocates General provide independent legal advice to the leadership of their respective Military Departments and that Judge Advocates in the field, in support of their Services or at joint commands, also have a responsibility to provide independent legal advice to military commanders.

105. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what will you do if you receive legal advice that an action you would like to take or are being asked to take is illegal?

Mr. FEINBERG. I will follow the law and the Constitution of the United States.

106. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if you refuse to take an action that you have been advised is illegal and learn that someone else in the Department took action, will you inform the Committee?

Mr. FEINBERG. While I do not anticipate such a situation, if it were to arise, I would follow the law and the Constitution of the United States, supported by the advice provided to me by DOD General Counsel and the Department of Justice. I would address such circumstances with my legal counsel and leadership chain so that the Department may take all appropriate actions.

107. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, in your hearing you said you would commit to respecting the independence of the Judge Advocate Generals. What measures will you put in place to ensure JAG officers can provide independent advice without influence or fear of reprisal?

Mr. FEINBERG. The Judge Advocates General report to and primarily advise the leadership of their respective Military Departments and Services. I understand that the Judge Advocates General provide independent legal advice, and that under the law no officer or employee of DOD may interfere with that. I expect the leadership of our Military Departments and Services will fully comply with the law in this regard as well in all things. If confirmed, I will be clear with my expectation that we fully comply with the law in executing the important mission of the Department of Defense.

#### DEFENSE REFORM

108. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, in your advance policy questions you said "we need to understand what issues and impediments the general counsels will bring and how we can solve them." What issues and impediments do you anticipate general counsels raising?

Mr. FEINBERG. Differing lexicons between the Department of Defense and the private sector can lead to miscommunication, which in turn complicates collaboration, private sector business practices, and the Department's mission. Over the past three decades working in the private sector, I have experience working with general counsels and the Department on such things as compliance with Federal regulations, cybersecurity requirements, intellectual property protection, and adherence to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR). If confirmed, I will work to improve communication and overall collaboration between the Department and the private sector, while ensuring all actions remain in compliance with necessary policies and law.

#### HYPERSONICS

109. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, in your hearing you said "[your] job would be to execute development—faster development with reasonable cost, and quickly, of hypersonic capability." What mission(s) would you assign hypersonic weapons to take on?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am not briefed on internal DOD analysis on this issue, but expect that hypersonic weapons are a critical element of the future mix of offensive U.S. capabilities and that they should be able to credibly threaten and, if necessary, defeat heavily defended and time-critical targets. If confirmed, I will work with the appropriate Department of Defense Components to assess the appropriate missions for hypersonic weapons.

110. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, would hypersonics replace any current U.S. military capabilities?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am not briefed on internal DOD analysis on this issue, but I expect that hypersonics are a critical part of the mix of capabilities necessary for the Joint Force to deter, and if necessary, prevail in future conflicts. If confirmed, I will work with the appropriate DOD Components to assess how hypersonics fit within the mix of U.S. offensive capabilities.

111. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what do you expect the cost of developing U.S. military hypersonic capability will be?

Mr. FEINBERG. I have not been briefed on classified information, but my understanding is that the Department of Defense has already invested significant resources in the development and near-term deployment of various hypersonic systems. If confirmed, I will determine the most cost-effective hypersonic capabilities to pursue and ensure that what we pursue is developed in an efficient manner.

112. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you commit to conducting a study and releasing a report on the cost-benefit analysis of developing hypersonic capabilities to ensure any U.S. military hypersonic development is “reasonable”?

Mr. FEINBERG. Yes. If confirmed, I will work with the Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) on a cost-benefit analysis of developing hypersonic capabilities, and subsequently, I look forward to working with Congress on this matter, to include releasing associated report(s).

113. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will fielding hypersonic weapons affect the posture of the United States, its allies, and near-peer competitors?

Mr. FEINBERG. Fielding U.S. hypersonic weapons may allow the United States greater flexibility in the posture of its forces. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting review of our global force posture, to include assessing how future hypersonic weapons may impact how we align forces to achieve our goals given the competitive geostrategic environment.

114. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what measures will you take to ensure transparency and multilateral arms control agreements are in place to mitigate risks associated with hypersonic capabilities?

Mr. FEINBERG. The United States should pursue transparency and arms control agreements when it is in U.S. interests to do so and when such agreements enhance U.S. security. However, progress in arms control is not an end in itself and depends on the participation of partners willing to abide by their commitments. I do not believe we should limit U.S. options in any future negotiation by prematurely imposing or presuming limitations to U.S. capabilities. Instead, we should remain open to negotiable conditions that maximize our ability to protect U.S. interests and defend the Nation, deter our adversaries, and assure our Allies and partners.

#### MISMANAGEMENT

115. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, please list all the Cerberus-owned companies that have declared bankruptcy.

Mr. FEINBERG. Over more than thirty years Cerberus has invested in thousands of companies across its various funds and investment platforms. It is extremely difficult to list every company or entity in which Cerberus has ever made an investment that has been the subject of a bankruptcy case over the last thirty years. My best estimate would be less than 1 percent (1 percent) of all Cerberus-owned companies went bankrupt over the last 10 years.

116. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, Cerberus touts its “operationally oriented” approach to investing, which includes heavy involvement in the operations of the companies it owns. What percentage of Cerberus-owned companies went bankrupt over the last 10 years?

Mr. FEINBERG. Over more than thirty years Cerberus has invested in thousands of companies across its various funds and investment platforms. It is extremely dif-

difficult to list every company or entity in which Cerberus has ever made an investment that has been the subject of a bankruptcy case over the last thirty years. My best estimate would be less than 1 percent (1 percent) of all Cerberus-owned companies went bankrupt over the last 10 years.

117. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if Cerberus has “functional experts” to “create stronger and more competitive businesses,” why have so many Cerberus-owned companies failed?

Mr. FEINBERG. Cerberus’ investment model typically seeks to help companies experiencing financial and/or operational distress or significant headwinds through financial and operational improvements. Cerberus’ investments have served as a lifeline to many companies facing difficult circumstances. Filing for bankruptcy is a rare outcome but given the nature of the business of investing in distressed companies for over three decades, there have been a small number of instances where filing for bankruptcy protection was necessary due to market, industry, and/or company-specific issues.

While no track record spanning more than three decades will produce a 100 percent success rate, Cerberus is proud of its success in stabilizing, improving, and creating value for hundreds of American businesses, hundreds of thousands of workers, and the communities and other stakeholders served by these businesses.

118. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, why did Chrysler have to file for bankruptcy?

Mr. FEINBERG. During Cerberus’ investment in Chrysler, the world’s economies and markets were rocked by the Global Financial Crisis. This steep recession hit the automotive industry especially hard and introduced insurmountable headwinds and disruptions to the sector, necessitating Chrysler’s bankruptcy proceedings.

When Cerberus acquired Chrysler from Daimler in May 2007, the company was in shambles having been starved for capital and technology by Daimler in favor of Mercedes for years. Cerberus put together a world-class operating team led by Robert Nardelli (formerly a deputy of Jack Welch at General Electric) and an exceptional team of automotive industry veterans. The new operating team was very successful in turning Chrysler from loss-making to profitable in a short period of time, saving billions in costs and initiating best-in-class operating and manufacturing protocols. Unfortunately, the Global Financial Crisis, which began around the time of the acquisition, accelerated at a pace unseen in decades, hitting the automotive industry particularly hard. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis own data, from 2007 to 2009 new vehicle sales fell nearly 40 percent in the United States alone. Auto manufacturing is a high fixed-cost business with heavy reliance on union labor. No business with such embedded fixed costs can survive, or restructure around, a sudden 40 percent+ reduction in its revenue, and Chrysler was no exception. Despite the best efforts of the management team, operating costs simply could not realistically adjust fast enough and deep enough to allow Chrysler to weather the multi-year collapse of auto sales. Cerberus, together with the Chrysler management team, worked rigorously with the U.S. Government, the lenders, and the unions to implement a comprehensive rescue plan for the automaker during this unprecedented and catastrophic collapse of sales for all automakers.

Ultimately, Cerberus partnered with the U.S. Government to help save the company and made material concessions to ensure the continuity of Chrysler, with the preservation of as many jobs as possible (both at Chrysler and the myriad suppliers and vendors who relied on Chrysler), to secure its ability to once again become a leading U.S. auto maker.

119. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what management decisions did Cerberus recommend to Chrysler leadership as a part of Cerberus’ “operationally oriented” approach to investing?

Mr. FEINBERG. During Cerberus’ investment in Chrysler, the world’s economies and markets were rocked by the Global Financial Crisis. This steep recession hit the automotive industry especially hard and introduced insurmountable headwinds and disruptions to the sector, necessitating Chrysler’s bankruptcy proceedings.

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the acquisition, accelerated at a pace unseen in decades, hitting the automotive industry particularly hard. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis own data, from 2007 to 2009 new vehicle sales fell nearly 40 percent in the United States alone. Auto manufacturing is a high fixed-cost business with heavy reliance on union labor. No business with such embedded fixed costs can survive, or restructure around, a sudden 40 percent+ reduction in its revenue, and Chrysler was no exception. Despite the best efforts of the management team, operating costs simply could not realistically adjust fast enough and deep enough to allow Chrysler to weather the multi-year collapse of auto sales. Cerberus, together with the Chrysler management team, worked rigorously with the U.S. Government, the lenders, and the unions to implement a comprehensive rescue plan for the automaker during this unprecedented and catastrophic collapse of sales for all automakers.

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120. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, why did Steward have to file for bankruptcy?

Mr. FEINBERG. The investment by Cerberus in Steward Healthcare in 2010 rescued and restored critical community hospitals in Massachusetts. The efforts of Cerberus and the Steward management team ensured continued access to healthcare for communities, protected more than 10,000 jobs, and secured the pensions of 13,000 current and former employees. Over the next decade, Cerberus supported Steward's investment of approximately \$900 million into facilities, technology, and personnel, as well as quantifiable improvements in the quality of care.

At the time Cerberus' ownership concluded in 2020, Steward had transformed into a nationally recognized Accountable Care Organization with substantial liquidity and, to the best of our knowledge, in compliance with all of its financial covenants. Steward ended 2020 (more than 6 months after Cerberus' ownership concluded) with access to more than \$650 million of total liquidity, including more than \$400 million of cash on its balance sheet. Cerberus did not have any input or control of Steward's management or operations, or any direct knowledge of Steward's performance and management decisions, following the conclusion of its controlling ownership in 2020.

I respectfully refer also to what Steward noted in its first-day filings with the United States Bankruptcy Court regarding how it was negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in patient and insurance revenue declining by 25 percent. Further details about the company's reasons for its bankruptcy filing in 2024 are outlined in its public bankruptcy case filings.

Cerberus has been fully cooperative and transparent with elected officials, Government regulators, and the public in providing information relating to its investment in the Steward hospital system. The full context of Cerberus' investment in Steward was provided to Senator Warren in our February 2024 letter, detailing the rescue, revitalization, financial health, improvement of patient care, and financial results of Steward during Cerberus' 10-year ownership. Additional material information was also provided to the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions in a letter dated September 2024.

121. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what management decisions did Cerberus recommend to Steward leadership as a part of Cerberus' "operationally oriented" approach to investing?

Mr. FEINBERG. The investment by Cerberus in Steward Healthcare in 2010 rescued and restored critical community hospitals in Massachusetts. The efforts of Cerberus and the Steward management team ensured continued access to healthcare for communities, protected more than 10,000 jobs, and secured the pensions of 13,000 current and former employees. Over the next decade, Cerberus supported Steward's investment of approximately \$900 million into facilities, technology, and personnel, as well as quantifiable improvements in the quality of care.

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122. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how much in total profits, including dividends and all other compensation or payouts, did Cerberus earn from its investments in Steward/Caritas Christi?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please refer to the letter Cerberus sent to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions in September 2024, which transparently discloses the capital Cerberus prudently invested in Steward. The proceeds of such invested capital belonged overwhelmingly to, and inured to the benefits of, Cerberus' investors, which include, among others, millions of teachers, firefighters, police, municipal workers, universities, and endowments.

123. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how much in total income, including dividends and all other compensation, did you earn as a result of Cerberus's investments in Steward/Caritas Christi?

Mr. FEINBERG. Pooled investment platforms such as the Cerberus funds and accounts earn incentive fees on a pooled/aggregate basis and are paid to the investment manager only after all capital and a preferred return are paid to investors. Consequently, the earning and allocation of incentive fees depends upon the timing in the lifecycle of a particular fund in which the investment is realized and cannot be attributed directly to any single investment.

124. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, why did Remington Outdoor Company have to file for bankruptcy?

Mr. FEINBERG. In 2006, funds and accounts managed by Cerberus acquired Bushmaster Firearms Co. and made subsequent add-on acquisitions that were later consolidated under the Remington Outdoor Company ("Remington") umbrella. For generations, gun manufacturers have focused on hunting and sport shooting enthusiasts within the broader outdoor sporting industry, which also includes fishing, camping, etc. Cerberus' investment thesis was to create a leading outdoor enthusiast business consisting of historic brands that could benefit from operational and financial expertise. Remington successfully pursued this strategy for many years through acquisitions, vertical integration, product development and operational improvements.

Many of the companies acquired were poorly managed and experiencing significant difficulties due to outdated manufacturing facilities and other operating inefficiencies. Cerberus supported a multitude of strategic investments, operational improvements and product development that led to significant efficiencies and profits growing more than five-fold.

The company operated at all times during Cerberus' ownership with a prudent and reasonable amount of debt, which was, as a multiple of earnings before income taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA), far below industry averages for private equity-owned businesses.

In 2012, following the tragedy at Sandy Hook, Cerberus immediately condemned the senseless, criminal act of horrific violence and announced that it would use best efforts to divest Remington from its portfolio. A premier financial advisor was retained to conduct a broad sale process, but no bidders were able to offer an executable transaction. In 2015, after concluding this exhaustive sale process, Cerberus placed Remington into a special purpose vehicle and offered investors the ability to sell their stakes in the company or remain invested. A significant percentage of investors chose to remain invested in the company.

During the Obama administration, industry-wide demand was pulled forward due to concerns regarding the safety and protection of Second Amendment rights. In response, Remington and other manufacturers produced additional inventory on an accelerated basis. As the Trump Administration took over, concerns about the industry and Second Amendment erosion abated, leading to an industry-wide precipitous

decline in sales and the liquidation of inventory at below-cost prices. In 2018, a chapter 11 filing was deemed necessary to secure the company's financial position and allow the continuation of its business. In May 2018, Remington emerged from chapter 11 after successfully implementing its plan of reorganization. As a result of the bankruptcy, Cerberus ceded its ownership to the company's lenders and concluded its ownership of Remington. Subsequently, under the ownership of its lenders, Remington filed a second bankruptcy case and was eventually sold.

125. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what management decisions did Cerberus recommend to Remington leadership as a part of Cerberus' "operationally oriented" approach to investing?

Mr. FEINBERG. In 2006, funds and accounts managed by Cerberus acquired Bushmaster Firearms Co. and made subsequent add-on acquisitions that were later consolidated under the Remington Outdoor Company ("Remington") umbrella. For generations, gun manufacturers have focused on hunting and sport shooting enthusiasts within the broader outdoor sporting industry, which also includes fishing, camping, etc. Cerberus' investment thesis was to create a leading outdoor enthusiast business consisting of historic brands that could benefit from operational and financial expertise. Remington successfully pursued this strategy for many years through acquisitions, vertical integration, product development and operational improvements.

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#### REVOLVING DOOR AND CERBERUS CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

126. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, please provide a list of all companies in which Cerberus has held investments at any point from 2015 to present that contract or have contracted with DOD or serve as a subcontractor for DOD contractors. For each of these companies, please provide the following information:

Mr. FEINBERG.

- for each DOD contractor or subcontractor that Cerberus has owned or invested in, please provide the time periods in which Cerberus owned or invested in the company.
- for each DOD contractor or subcontractor that Cerberus has owned or invested in, please provide the value of the DOD contracts or subcontracts with DOD contractors with the company, for each calendar year that Cerberus owned or invested in the company.

Please refer to the Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE Form 278e) dated February 8, 2025, that I filed in connection with my nomination as Deputy Defense Secretary. As a consequence of the scope and volume of Cerberus' investment plat-

forms, I made the determination to fully divest to comply with OGE guidelines, avoid any potential conflicts of interest, and ensure compliance with applicable law and policy.

127. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you fully divest from your direct and indirect ownership of Cerberus, any independent Cerberus funds, or any companies Cerberus is invested in while you are in office?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, consistent with my Ethics Agreement, I will divest all of my interests in Cerberus Capital Management, L.P. and related Cerberus entities, which are disclosed in detail in the agreement, including, but not limited to, my equity interest, carried interest, incentive fees/allocations, and capital commitments.

128. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, who or what organization will buy and/or manage your ownership stake in Cerberus while you are in office?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, consistent with my Ethics Agreement, I will divest all of my interests in Cerberus Capital Management, L.P. and related Cerberus entities. Such divestiture may include a gift to one or more irrevocable trusts established for the benefit of my adult children, in which neither my wife nor I have any financial interest, and/or for the benefit of one or more public charities. I will not be the trustee for any of these trusts. The trustees of these trusts will be solely responsible for their administration, including any distributions either to my children or to charity.

129. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will your ownership of Cerberus be transferred into a trust?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, consistent with my Ethics Agreement, I will divest all of my interests in Cerberus Capital Management, L.P. and related Cerberus entities. Such divestiture may include a gift to one or more irrevocable trusts established for the benefit of my adult children, in which neither my wife nor I have any financial interest, and/or for the benefit of one or more public charities. I will not be the trustee for any of these trusts. The trustees of these trusts will be solely responsible for their administration, including any distributions either to my children or to charity.

130. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will your children have any type of ownership, access, or benefit from that trust?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, consistent with my Ethics Agreement, I will divest all of my interests in Cerberus Capital Management, L.P. and related Cerberus entities. Such divestiture may include a gift to one or more irrevocable trusts established for the benefit of my adult children, in which neither my wife nor I have any financial interest, and/or for the benefit of one or more public charities. I will not be the trustee for any of these trusts. The trustees of these trusts will be solely responsible for their administration, including any distributions either to my children or to charity.

131. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if confirmed, will you commit to not receiving any benefit from Cerberus, any independent Cerberus funds, or any companies Cerberus is invested in for 4 years after leaving DOD?

Mr. FEINBERG. I will abide by the extensive post-Government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-Government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

132. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if confirmed, will you recuse yourself while at DOD from matters that involve former companies you or Cerberus have owned or invested in?

Mr. FEINBERG. My Ethics Agreement and existing laws and policies will require me, if confirmed and appointed, to recuse myself for a period of 2 years from participating personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know that a former employer is a party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate by the appropriate ethics official. I will ensure that I have a robust screening process in place to help implement these recusals. I can pledge to you that I will be mindful of not only the legal requirements that

govern my conduct, but also of the need to ensure that the public has no reason to question my impartiality, and I will consult with the Department's ethics officials should such issues arise.

133. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if confirmed, will you commit to not working for defense contractors or entities that invest in defense contractors for 4 years after leaving DOD?

Mr. FEINBERG. I will abide by the extensive post-Government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-Government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

134. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if confirmed, will you commit to not working for a defense contractor or any entity that invests in a defense contractor for 10 years after leaving DOD?

Mr. FEINBERG. I will abide by the extensive post-Government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-Government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

135. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, did you use any of the information you gained as a member of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board to inform Cerberus's investments?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

136. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, which investments?

Mr. FEINBERG. I did not use any information I gained as a member of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board to inform Cerberus's investments.

137. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, were the moves by Cerberus to acquire the Subic Bay shipyard informed in any way by information you obtained as a member of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board during President Trump's first term?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

138. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, did you have any conversation with President Trump about a cabinet position before you donated to his Presidential campaign?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

139. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, did you ask to be considered for a position in President Trump's administration in return for your donations to Trump's campaign?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

140. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, did you ever give payments to any person or entity in exchange for using their influence to promote your candidacy for a Presidential nomination from President Trump?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

141. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, in November 2024, the New York Times and other news outlets reported that Boris Epshteyn, a top adviser to President-elect Trump, allegedly requested payment from prospective political appointees to promote their candidacies for top positions within the Administration. Did you discuss the possibility of joining the Administration with Mr. Epshteyn at any time?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

142. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, did Mr. Epshteyn seek payment from you for promoting your candidacy for a position within the Administration?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.



143. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, at any time, did lawyers for President Trump approach you regarding Mr. Epshteyn and the allegations cited above?

Mr. FEINBERG. No.

144. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, please explain.

Mr. FEINBERG. At no time did lawyers for President Trump approach me regarding Mr. Epshteyn and the allegations cited above.

145. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, please provide a summary of any payments made by any presumptive or potential nominee for a Presidential appointment to you or your agents or associates, or any entity owned or controlled by Boris Epshteyn or his agents or associates.

Mr. FEINBERG. There were none.

#### ENGAGEMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

146. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will you work with the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to combat price gouging by DOD contractors?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have specific knowledge of DOGE's role relating to the Department of Defense, so I cannot say how I would work with them as a hypothetical.

147. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you direct or advise that DOGE investigate how to improve transparency in contracting with DOD?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have specific knowledge of DOGE's role relating to the Department of Defense, so I cannot tell say how I would work with them as a hypothetical.

148. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you direct or advise that DOGE investigate how to improve DOD's ability to get contractors to provide cost and pricing data to ensure DOD is not paying excessive amounts for a good or service?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have specific knowledge of DOGE's role relating to the Department of Defense, so I cannot tell say how I would work with them as a hypothetical.

149. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you commit to ensuring DOGE does not gain access to DOD or contractor data that could create a conflict of interest for the head of DOGE, Elon Musk, who has an interest in DOD contracts?

Mr. FEINBERG. I understand the serious responsibility to safeguard sensitive information and prevent conflicts of interest. Access to DOD and contractor data is granted on a need-to-know basis, determined by strict security protocols, statute, and regulations. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department remains committed to maintaining the highest standards of data security and ethical conduct.

150. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will you ensure DOGE does not gain access to DOD or contractor data that could create a conflict of interest for Elon Musk, who has an interest in DOD Contracts?

Mr. FEINBERG. I understand the serious responsibility to safeguard sensitive information and prevent conflicts of interest. Access to DOD and contractor data is granted on a need-to-know basis, determined by strict security protocols, statute, and regulations. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department remains committed to maintaining the highest standards of data security and ethical conduct.

#### OUTSOURCING

151. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you agree that private security contractors can undermine the mission of U.S. servicemembers?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will review the Department's policies on private security contractors and ascertain whether they undermine DOD missions. Based on my current understanding, I believe that private contractors have an important role in supporting the mission of U.S. servicemembers, as has been the case for many years. It is well established and documented by people in the highest levels of the United States military that contractors can, and do, support missions in a variety of critical ways and are used extensively across military branches and operations because of their proven effectiveness.

152. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, do you agree that private security contractors have undermined the mission of U.S. servicemembers in places like Iraq and Afghanistan?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will review whether the Department's policies on private security contractors undermined the mission in Iraq and Afghanistan.

153. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, when would you consider using a private security contractor over U.S. servicemembers?

Mr. FEINBERG. As a private citizen, I would be speculating. However, if confirmed, I will have a better understanding on how the Department makes decisions on contracting private security contractors.

154. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, did you reassure the Trump administration that there would be accountability and transparency when you offered to have DynCorp take a bigger role in Afghanistan?

Mr. FEINBERG. No such discussions ever occurred.

155. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if you are confirmed to be Deputy Secretary, will you commit to bolstering the transparency and accountability of private security contractors?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will ensure all DOD expenditures are transparent and accountable to the American taxpayer.

156. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, since being given an E grade from Transparency International, what have you changed at DynCorp to limit your company's susceptibility to corruption?

Mr. FEINBERG. An important clarification is that Cerberus does not currently own DynCorp and has not had any involvement with the company since it concluded its ownership in 2020. It is also important to note that military contracting is a very competitive space. Companies operate with very thin profit margins in places where their employees, many of whom are military veterans, risk their lives to support the men and women of the U.S. military. This was the case at DynCorp. During Cerberus' ownership, the company supported the U.S. military in many intense conflict areas. During Cerberus' ownership of DynCorp, 84 brave employees who worked side-by-side with American servicemembers lost their lives, and that is something that should always be remembered.

I am not familiar with the report you reference from "Transparency International", so I cannot comment. However, accountability and transparency were always paramount during Cerberus' investment in DynCorp. During Cerberus' ownership, the company developed and implemented a robust global compliance framework consisting of new and updated policies, procedures, training, monitoring, and reporting. A culture of compliance was instituted globally and enforced through a variety of mandatory policies. DynCorp maintained a commitment to compliance worldwide (visas, business licenses, tax, labor laws, anti-corruption, CTIPS, procurement integrity, etc.) and operated transparently throughout Cerberus' ownership.

#### VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

157. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, four Saudis killed journalist Jamal Khashoggi on October 2, 2018. Reports have indicated that these murderers were trained by Cerberus's Tier 1 Group. Did you receive any warning or notice that these individuals were a risk or of concern in any way before Khashoggi's killing?

Mr. FEINBERG. Tier 1 Group ("T1G") is a company owned by funds and accounts managed by affiliates of Cerberus. It was originally formed in 2006 to provide training to U.S. Department of Defense forces as they prepared for overseas deployment and contingency operations. T1G has worked transparently with the U.S. Department of State across three Administrations to provide professional services to the United States and allied nations. The U.S. Department of State, in collaboration with other U.S. Departments and Agencies, is the vetting authority for both the programs offered by T1G and all foreign personnel trained by T1G under export licenses issued by the Department.

It is factual that certain individuals from the Saudi Royal Guard who were alleged to have participated in the tragic killing of journalist Jamaal Khashoggi did attend a training at T1G's facilities.

Each of the individuals had been cleared by, and received visas from, the U.S. Department of State to enter the United States for training at T1G's facilities, in a program also approved by the Department of State. Media reports accurately confirmed that the training was conducted under a State Department license. The training in question was for defensive-only skills relating to protecting a VIP/senior official and was completely unrelated to, and long prior to this heinous event.

T1G confirmed that it was in full compliance with all laws and regulations regarding the training provided to the Saudi Royal Guard. T1G and Cerberus stood firmly with the U.S. Government, the American people, and the international community in condemning the horrific murder of Mr. Khashoggi. Following that terrible event, T1G ceased all contracts with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

158. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, when did you receive notice?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above.

159. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, who gave you notice?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above.

160. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, did Tier 1 Group flag the four Saudis who killed Khashoggi for the company's leadership while they were training at Tier 1 Group facilities?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above.

161. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, when did Tier 1 Group flag the four members?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above.

162. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, did you notify a Government agency?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above.

163. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, when did you notify the agency?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above.

164. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, which agency did you notify?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above.

165. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how did you receive notice that four members of the group that murdered Khashoggi were trained by Tier 1 Group?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above. As I recall, I learned about this from reports in the media.

166. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, when did you receive notice that four members of the group that murdered Khashoggi were trained by Tier 1 Group?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above.

167. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, who provided you notice that four members of the group that murdered Khashoggi were trained by Tier 1 Group?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above.

168. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, did you change any policies at Tier 1 Group to address the fact that Khashoggi's killers were trained by your company?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above. After a review by the T1G board of directors, it was determined that the company had followed all relevant rules and regulations, and no policy changes were required. A decision was made by T1G, however, to refrain from any further engagements with the KDA or its personnel.

169. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, did the State Department ask Tier 1 Group to change any policies to address the fact that Khashoggi's killers were trained by your company?

Mr. FEINBERG. Please see response to question 157 above.

170. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if you are confirmed as Deputy Secretary, how will you ensure the Department upholds the rule of law?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to ensure that the Department upholds the rule of law. I would favor the promulgation of policies reinforcing the central importance of legal compliance, appropriate consultation with legal counsel in decisionmaking, training the workforce on legal standards, and demanding transparency and accountability whenever violations occur.

## DEFRAUDING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

171. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what policies did you have in place to ensure DynCorp did not participate in overcharging the U.S. Government while you owned the company?

Mr. FEINBERG. During Cerberus' ownership of DynCorp, the company developed and implemented a robust global compliance framework consisting of new and updated policies, procedures, training, monitoring, and reporting. A culture of compliance was instituted globally and enforced through a variety of mandatory policies. During Cerberus' ownership period, DynCorp was not exposed to any criminal charges and won or favorably resolved most of the civil cases against the company, the majority of which were initiated before Cerberus' acquisition. In addition, all False Claims Act matters, with the exception of one, were brought by relators and not by the Government or regulators. The Department of Justice generally refrained from intervening in such cases and then, following defense by DynCorp, most cases were dropped without any payment or settlement by DynCorp. During the time that Cerberus owned DynCorp, it did not pay any money to settle any False Claim Act cases and obtained many outright dismissals, emphasizing that the cases lacked merit.

172. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will you ensure defense contractors are not overcharging the Department when contracting with it?

Mr. FEINBERG. It is vital that contractors—particularly those that are operating in a sole-source environment providing defense-specific products—are transparent with DOD. Defense acquisition professionals are often deprived of access to the contractor cost data that would indicate price gouging. Consequently, my understanding is that systems are hamstrung in comparing unit prices over time at the prime and subcontract level, which makes it challenging to identify where bad behaviors may be present.

173. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you strengthen acquisition law to ensure the Department receives cost or pricing data when a contract is awarded through a bidding process with only one bidder?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work with Congress as necessary to strengthen laws. The ability to collect cost and pricing data is, in large part, a function of statutory authorities and requirement, not DOD regulation. Competition is only effective at controlling price when it actually exists. If competition or a competitive commercial marketplace do not exist, the Department needs cost and pricing data to ensure it is getting fair prices.

174. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you strengthen acquisition law to ensure the Department receives cost or pricing data when a contractor does not provide any commercial sales basis to establish the reasonableness of an item's commercial status, cost, or price?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work with Congress as necessary to strengthen laws and support reform to assure that DOD receives cost and pricing data when there is no competitive market. Absent the competition that shapes price commercially and absent direct competition, cost and pricing data are necessary.

175. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you ensure the Department receives technical data rights without having to pay more when contracts already allow or require the contractor to provide the data to the Department?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that the Department's acquisition officials receive the data and associated rights that our contractors are contractually required to deliver and ensure that our officials take appropriate actions if the data and rights are not provided.

176. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you ensure that any contracts with the Department in the future will require contractors to provide technical data rights that allow servicemembers to repair equipment when in austere or contested logistics environments?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will direct a review of our existing data and associated rights contractual requirements, to understand the impact on both cost and readiness.

177. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what is your broader strategy to prevent contractor corruption?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work collaboratively with the Department of Justice to assure that lessons learned are disseminated accordingly and to aggressively deter and, if necessary, address corruption in the form of procurement fraud.

178. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you implement acquisition reforms to keep DOD's budget under control and prevent taxpayer gouging?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed I will support the acquisition workforce and the Defense Contract Audit Agency to complete the due diligence that is required to prevent taxpayer gouging on the Department's contracts.

179. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, what acquisition reforms would you want to advance?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary for Acquisition and Sustainment to understand the effectiveness of the reforms that have recently been put into place, such as the Adaptive Acquisition Framework. In my view, effective reforms are those that enable the acquisition workforce to timely deliver the lethal capability our warfighters demand.

#### FEDERAL WORKFORCE

180. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will you use your position as Deputy Secretary to strengthen the civilian workforce at DOD?

Mr. FEINBERG. I believe DOD cannot operate effectively without a dedicated and skilled civilian workforce, and it needs to have the right people with the right skills in the right positions. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that DOD maintains a capable, agile civilian workforce that supports the Department's mission and strategic objectives.

181. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) email offering employees a so-called buyout exempts "those in positions related to immigration enforcement and national security, and those in any other positions specifically excluded by your employing agency." Will you commit to ensuring all DOD employees are exempt from this offer?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP). If confirmed, I would support exemptions to the DRP as needed to avoid negative impacts to the Department's critical missions and national security priorities.

182. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if DOD employees are not exempt, will the decision on whether or not to accept employees' resignations include an assessment of how the loss of the employee in that role would impact DOD capabilities?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), but I believe that the Department should seek exemptions to the DRP as needed to avoid negative impacts to the Department's critical missions and national security priorities.

183. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, how will you make the assessment? Please detail all the factors you would consider.

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work with DOD leadership to determine the best method to assess which civilian personnel should be exempt from the DRP program based on impact to DOD capabilities.

184. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if resignations are accepted, will those positions be backfilled with private sector contractors to fulfill the employees' duties?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the DRP. If confirmed, I will ensure that workforce decisions align with DOD fiscal responsibilities, legal requirements, and workforce management principles to maximize mission effectiveness.

185. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, what is the estimated cost for having to backfill those roles?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the DRP. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department's workforce and resources are best aligned against mission critical warfighting and readiness functions, while also ensuring the Department takes the necessary steps to reshape the workforce in order to meet the President's priorities.

186. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how will DOD continue to vet and award contracts if a significant portion of DOD's contracting officials accept the offer?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the DRP. If confirmed, I will ensure that workforce decisions align with DOD fiscal responsibilities, legal requirements, and workforce management principles to maximize mission effectiveness.

187. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what impact will these types of resignations have on DOD contracting?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the DRP. If confirmed, I will ensure that workforce decisions align with DOD fiscal responsibilities, legal requirements, and workforce management principles to maximize mission effectiveness.

188. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what impact will these types of resignations have on oversight of DOD contracting?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the DRP. If confirmed, I will ensure that workforce decisions align with DOD fiscal responsibilities, legal requirements, and workforce management principles to maximize mission effectiveness.

189. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what will be the cost of retraining contract officials?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the DRP. If confirmed, I will ensure that workforce decisions align with DOD fiscal responsibilities, legal requirements, and workforce management principles to maximize mission effectiveness.

190. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what will be the timeline for refilling the contracting workforce after these types of resignations?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the DRP. If confirmed, I will ensure that workforce decisions align with DOD fiscal responsibilities, legal requirements, and workforce management principles to maximize mission effectiveness.

191. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if DOD accepts these buyout resignations, when will DOD provide Congress a comprehensive report on employees who have accepted the buyout offer, which should include at least how many employees, which type of employees, and a strategy to fill the critical positions moving forward?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the DRP. If confirmed, I will determine the status of that program and ensure that the Department provides timely and accurate information to Congress on workforce reductions and strategies for maintaining critical capabilities.

192. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, did DOD apply the national security exemption mentioned in the resignation offer to DOD civilian employees?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the DRP.

193. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if not, why are DOD civilian employees not receiving this exemption?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information about the Department's current approach to the DRP and am not aware of how the Department manages exemptions from the DRP.

194. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, does DOD currently have the appropriate funding to pay for the resignation agreements?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will review resignation agreements and ensure the Department appropriately funds such arrangements.

195. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, please provide details on what funding DOD is using to fulfill these resignation agreements.

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work with the Comptroller to ensure resignation agreements are funded out of the proper account.

196. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, what protections are in place to ensure employees will receive their benefits?

Mr. FEINBERG. The Department must ensure that it provides employees benefits to which they are entitled in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. If confirmed, I will fully support doing so.

197. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, does DOD plan to hire new civilian employees between now and September 2025?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am not aware of the Department's current civilian workforce management plans. If confirmed, I will review DOD's hiring plans to ensure they align with workforce optimization objectives.

198. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, please provide details on what funding DOD is using to pay for those hires.

Mr. FEINBERG. I am not aware of the Department's current civilian workforce management plans. If confirmed, I will work with the Comptroller and assess DOD's funding sources to ensure compliance with appropriations and budgetary guidance, as appropriate.

199. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, has DOD ensured it has followed and continues to follow OPM's Reduction of Force policies?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have non-public information concerning the Department's workforce shaping plans. If confirmed, I will ensure that DOD adheres to all applicable laws and regulations.

200. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will DOD ensure it provides the benefits to employees required by OPM's Reduction of Force policies?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have any non-public information concerning the Department's actions with respect to Reduction of Force policies. If confirmed, I will ensure that DOD adheres to all applicable workforce reduction policies.

201. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, does DOD's assessment of its return-to-office policies find there is enough space to accommodate the workforce required to return to the office?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will review DOD's return-to-office policies and the space available for its workforce.

202. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, did DOD have to acquire, or will it need to acquire, any new space to fulfill its return-to-office policy?

Mr. FEINBERG. I have not been involved in Department discussions regarding space requirements. If confirmed, I will review DOD's facility needs to support its workforce.

203. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, if so, how much did or will adding new space cost?

Mr. FEINBERG. I do not have non-public information concerning whether the Department requires additional space. If confirmed, I will assess the issue and ensure that the Department executes its mission in an efficient and fiscally responsible way.

204. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you commit to ensuring that any Federal civilian employee at DOD will be given notice and reason for having their employment terminated?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will ensure that any Department personnel actions, including any terminations and associated notifications, comply with applicable laws and regulations.

205. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you commit to ensuring probationary employees at DOD will be given notice and reason if their employment will be terminated?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will ensure that any Department personnel actions, including any terminations and associated notifications, comply with applicable laws and regulations.

206. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how do you plan to grow a modern workforce with skills in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and AI at DOD?

Mr. FEINBERG. Providing Americans with the defense and security they deserve is contingent upon having the highest-skilled workforce in the world—both uniformed and civilian. If confirmed, I will pursue a data driven and technology en-

abled strategy to ensure we recruit, develop, and retain the talent we need, with a particular emphasis on mission-critical areas like STEM and A.I.

207. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, how do you plan to improve morale after the Administration's tactics to push the civilian workforce to resign?

Mr. FEINBERG. Civilian employees are a vital component of DOD's force structure. If confirmed, I will assess and monitor workforce morale, and as necessary, implement strategies to enhance engagement and retention.

208. Senator WARREN. Mr. Feinberg, will you commit to ensuring the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) does not gain access to sensitive or personal information about Department of Defense civilian employees or military personnel?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I will work with the appropriate officials in the Department to ensure that sensitive or personal information about DOD civilian employees and military personnel is appropriately safeguarded and accessed in accordance with law, policy and regulations.

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

##### CHILDCARE FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

209. Senator ROSEN. Mr. Feinberg, to build a resilient military force, it's crucial to meet the needs of servicemembers' families. An acute challenge for military families in Nevada and across the country is accessing affordable, high-quality childcare. DOD's "In-Home Child Care Fee Assistance Pilot Program" was launched to help provide in-home child care solutions for servicemembers in regions with exceptionally high demand. The pilot program was expanded to include Las Vegas. However, I have been told by airmen in my State that the program has so much red tape and cumbersome requirements that it is essentially unavailable to many Nevada military families who desperately need this service. If confirmed, how will you approach fixing this problem in order to provide more accessible childcare options for military families, particularly for those who work outside of normal business hours supporting 24-hour operations?

Mr. FEINBERG. I understand that our servicemembers rely on essential programs like childcare to help them meet the needs of their families. Family readiness is a key component to mission readiness, allowing our servicemembers to focus on their jobs with the knowledge that their families have the support they need. The In-Home Child Care Fee Assistance Pilot Program (Child Care in Your Home) and other fee assistance programs are important to meeting the needs of military families, as many servicemembers have nonstandard hours and frequently travel for training or deployment. If confirmed, I will prioritize streamlining processes and procedures for servicemembers to access quality, affordable childcare.

##### MENTAL HEALTH

210. Senator ROSEN. Mr. Feinberg, mental health challenges in the military—including post-traumatic stress (PTS) and suicide—remain a critical concern for servicemembers, veterans, and their families. Despite ongoing efforts, the military continues to face barriers in providing timely and effective mental health support to those in need. If confirmed, what specific initiatives will you implement to improve access to mental health care, address PTS, and reduce the rates of suicide among servicemembers, both during and after their service?

Mr. FEINBERG. The health and readiness of our servicemembers, to include their mental health, will be a top priority for me. The Military Health System should continue to expand access to mental health care through new modalities like tele-behavioral health and by bolstering the mental health workforce.

If confirmed, I will look to strengthen partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure continuity of care for mental health needs like Post Traumatic Stress or suicide risk factors. I believe the inTransition program, which helps bridge clinical care between DOD and VA, must also be improved, and I will seek to continue implementation of actions directed in response to the 2023 Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee report.

211. Senator ROSEN. Mr. Feinberg, what proactive measures do you plan to take to ensure servicemembers' mental health issues are identified and addressed early, before they escalate to crises like suicide?

Mr. FEINBERG. I am supportive of DOD's proactive approach to suicide prevention and mental health, which includes primary prevention, identification of suicide risk



and protective factors, and treatment of mental health conditions. My understanding is DOD policy requires that all servicemembers are annually screened with a mental health assessment designed to identify psychological health concerns including suicide risk that may require referral for additional care and treatment.

If confirmed, I will ensure compliance with this policy and continue implementation of the actions directed in response to the 2023 Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee report.

#### REBUILDING TRUST

212. Senator ROSEN. Mr. Feinberg, the first Trump administration disregarded Congress' direction and diverted billions of dollars of military construction funds—readiness investments in our force—to put toward unrelated, non-military projects that Congress had not authorized or funded. This has resulted in lost trust and is why Congress does not grant the Department more funding flexibility as it used to. Do you ascribe to that same disregard of Congress' Article One authority to determine priorities for investing in our troops and our national security?

Mr. FEINBERG. I fully commit to uphold the U.S. Constitution in executing the duties and responsibilities of my position.

213. Senator ROSEN. Mr. Feinberg, what is your plan to restore trust between Congress and the Department?

Mr. FEINBERG. I recognize the importance of trust and open communication between the Department of Defense and Congress. If confirmed, I am committed to enhancing transparency, improving communication, and actively engaging with Members and congressional committees.

214. Senator ROSEN. Mr. Feinberg, will you commit to protecting congressionally appropriated funds from being misused again if directed to do so by President Trump, particularly when doing so can undermine our force readiness?

Mr. FEINBERG. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that all funds the Congress provides to the Department of Defense are spent wisely and in accordance with the law.

[The nomination reference of Mr. Stephen A. Feinberg follows:]

**NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT**

**PN12-16**

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,  
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,  
January 20, 2025.

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

Stephen Feinberg, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of Defense, vice Kathleen Holland Hicks, resigned.

\_\_\_\_\_, 2025.  
(Date)

Reported by Mr. Wicker \_\_\_\_\_  
(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 Mr. Stephen A. Feinberg, which was transmitted to the Committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

**Bio**  
**Stephen A. Feinberg**

**Age:** 64

**Education:**

- **Princeton University**, Princeton, NJ, 1978-1982.
  - A.B. degree, 1982.

**Employment Record:**

- CEO of **Cerberus Capital Management, L.P.**, New York, NY, and numerous positions in affiliated management companies, 1992-present. *Over three decades, Mr. Feinberg has grown Cerberus to approximately \$70 billion in assets under management and has led the company to become a global leader in an operationally focused approach that develops and transforms all types of companies and assets across a wide range of industries. Over the last decade, Cerberus has had a focus on the U.S. defense industry and investments that strengthen supply chain integrity.*
- Chairman of **President's Intelligence Advisory Board**, 2018-2021.
- Managed assets at **Gruntal & Co.**, New York, NY, 1985-1992.
- Traded at **Drexel Burnham Lambert Inc.**, New York, NY, 1982 -1985.

**Honors and Awards:**

- Honored by **Teach for America** at an awards dinner, 2007.
- Honored at a luncheon by the **Congressional Black Caucus Foundation** for support in creating the Stephen Feinberg Scholarship Program, 2014.

[The Committee on Armed Services requires all individuals nominated from civilian life by the President to positions requiring the advice and consent of the Senate to complete a form that details the biographical, financial, and other information of the nominee. The form executed by Mr. Stephen A. Feinberg in connection with his nomination follows:]

**119<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, 2025 -- 2026  
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):**  
[Stephen A. Feinberg](#)
2. **Position to which nominated:**  
[Deputy Secretary of Defense](#)
3. **Date of nomination:** [January 20, 2025](#)
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):**

DOC ID - 47873079.3

Secondary School: Spring Valley Senior High School  
Spring Valley, NY  
Class of 1978

College: Princeton University  
Princeton, NJ  
Class of 1982

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):**

CEO of Cerberus Capital Management, L.P. ("CCM") and numerous positions in affiliated management companies for more than ten years. (CCM together with its affiliated entities is referred to as "Cerberus" below.)

6. **Have you ever received approval, pursuant to section 908 of title 37, United States Code, to accept civil employment (and compensation for that employment), payment for speeches, travel, meals, lodging, registration fees, or a non-cash award from a foreign government?** No.
7. **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):**  
Chairman of President's Intelligence Advisory Board, 2018-2021.
8. **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):** Please see Part 1 of Form 278e.
9. **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):**

Memberships: Adirondack League Club  
Mashomack Hunting Preserve  
Leash Club

**10. 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): *Not applicable.*

b. List all memberships and offices held in, and services rendered to, all political parties or election committees during the last 5 years:

*Member of the Republican Party.*

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:

*Please see Attachment A.10.c., attached.*

**11. Honors and awards (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements):** *I was honored in 2007 by Teach for America at an awards dinner. In addition, I was honored at a luncheon in 2014 by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation for my support in creating the Stephen Feinberg Scholarship Program.*

**12. 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):** *Not applicable.*

**13. 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).** *Not applicable.*

**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

DOC ID - 47873079.3

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.

14. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate Committees of Congress? [Yes.](#)
15. 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.](#)
16. 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.](#)
17. 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.](#)
18. 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.](#)
19. 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.](#)
20. 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.](#)

#### **FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS**

DOC ID - 47873079.3

21. **If you are confirmed by the Senate, will you sever all business connections with your present employers, business firms, business associations, and business organizations?** Yes
22. **Do you have any plans, commitments or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government?** No. **If so, explain.**



**Attachment A.10.c**

2020	Team Haggerty	\$5,600
2020	Trump for President (Trump Victory)	\$357,800
2020	America First PAC (America First Action, Inc.)	\$1,000,000
2020	David Perdue (Perdue for Senate)	\$2,800
2020	California Republican Party Federal Acct	\$10,000
2020	Republican National Committee	\$35,500
2024	Securing America Greatness	\$1,500,000

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[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.]

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**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 4<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2025

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'S' followed by a horizontal line and a flourish.

[The nomination of Mr. Stephen A. Feinberg was reported to the Senate by Chairman Wicker on March 11, 2025, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on March 14, 2025.]

○