

**TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF
MR. ELBRIDGE A. COLBY TO BE UNDER
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

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**TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF
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TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2025

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 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, Cramer, Rick Scott, Tuberville, Mullin, Budd, Schmitt, Banks, Sheehy, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Peters, Duckworth, Rosen, Kelly, and Slotkin.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER WICKER

Chairman WICKER. The hearing will come to order. Thank you all for being here.

This morning, the Committee meets to consider the nomination of Mr. Elbridge Colby to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. I want to thank Mr. Colby for his willingness to serve again. I want to thank his wife, Susana, and their children for being here today.

It also says a lot that Mr. Colby will be introduced today by two distinguished friends, Vice President JD Vance and Senator Banks. We are informed that the Vice President is in traffic, and so after consulting to my right and left, we will proceed, again, because there are time constraints. When the Vice President arrives, I think he will be arriving just in time.

So proceeding on, if confirmed, Mr. Colby would oversee the developments of policy and strategy for the Department of Defense (DOD). He would assume these responsibilities during the most dangerous security environment since World War II.

The deepening military cooperation between China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea represents a complex and far-reaching set of threats. These threats demand a generational investment to revitalize America's military strength. They demand rapid Pentagon reform, and they demand a fresh look at strategies needed to achieve our national security objectives.

The American people need to understand what is at stake. We should help the country appreciate the risks imposed to our way of life. Beijing is leading an emerging alliance of countries with one clear objective, to use their economic and military power to tear

down the United States and impose their will on global affairs. The new axis of aggressors is a greater menace than we have faced in decades.

Under Xi Jinping's leadership, the Chinese Communist Party has undertaken one of the largest and most aggressive military build-ups in history. Their speed has been astounding. In just a few short years, China has built more nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles than the United States has in decades. They have tested orbital bombardment weapons and unveiled what may be the world's first sixth-generation fighter aircraft. China possesses a shipbuilding capacity over 230 times that of the United States, over 230 times. That is almost inconceivable.

Over 3 years ago, Vladimir Putin launched the first invasion of a European country since World War II. He has barraged the Ukrainian people with constant missile and drone attacks. The Kremlin has developed a variety of new weapons capabilities, including nuclear-armed satellites. Meanwhile, Russia actively provides enriched uranium to China to support Beijing's nuclear build-up. Putin has also been suspected of aiding North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

Moving on to North Korea, the nuclear arsenal there continues to advance unchecked. Kim Jong-un has been aiding Russia's war machine as it terrorizes Europe. Pyongyang's missiles could soon be capable of overwhelming our defenses, North Korea's, especially if reports of Russian assistance are accurate.

In the Middle East, Israel has successfully crippled Iran's proxies in the region, but these setbacks may spur Tehran to take the final step to build a nuclear weapon, permanently altering the balance of power in that region.

Few really understand how this axis of aggressors is working to make Americans less safe. If confirmed, I hope Mr. Colby can help Secretary Hegseth make sure the public sees these threats for what they are. During Secretary Hegseth's hearing I spoke about the importance of building a motivated and highly competent team of professionals at the Pentagon. In this regard, Mr. Colby is certainly qualified for the role to which President Trump has nominated him.

For more than 2 decades, he has worked on defense policy. Mr. Colby previously served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development. In that role, Mr. Colby played a pivotal role in the formulation of the 2018 National Defense Strategy, the first real strategy in years. His leadership was crucial in helping the United States articulate the need for a new defense posture, one focused on strategic competition with China and Russia and the overdue modernization of our military.

Mr. Colby and I have been ringing the same bell on military unpreparedness for years, particularly as it relates to China. This Committee would echo exhortations on defense policy in the Western Pacific. We should make Taiwan a porcupine, and Taipei is sprinting in that direction. We should build a larger United States military footprint in East Asia, and we should accelerate the most important weapons programs to deter China.

President Trump has made it clear that he intends to rebuild the military and reform the Pentagon. He campaigned on peace

through strength. We all want to keep America safe and prosperous. To secure that peace will enable a golden age for America. But we do not now have the strength that can guarantee us the peace.

Given the threat environment facing us, I strongly believe that we cannot simply pivot our attention and resources from one threat to another. That is an approach the Obama administration tried, and it did fail. We must be focused and strategic, but we need to be clear. Beijing sees its fight against America as a global fight. Beijing is not pivoting between theaters or among theaters. Significant American withdrawal in Europe, Africa, South America, or the Middle East will allow the Chinese Communist Party to overcome us strategically, even if we are able to prevent military conflict in East Asia in the near term.

In the past few weeks, President Trump has killed five top al Qaeda and ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] terrorists. Good for him. He has green-lit a more aggressive campaign against the Houthis and promised to support Israel to the hilt. All these policies are in line with the President's desire for lasting peace and prosperity in the United States, and, Mr. Colby, I am sure that is your desire too.

Now, Mr. Colby, your views on each theater have seemingly evolved since 2018, and I am sure there will be discussions about that that are worth exploring. It goes without saying that the elephant in this hearing room today is the recent developments with regard to Ukraine and Russia and this Administration. I was disappointed and dismayed as I watched the televised meeting involving the President of the United States and President Zelensky. I was distressed that the White House meeting ended without the signing of the minerals agreement, which was there to be signed, as I understand it.

This was followed by a television appearance by President Zelensky and then a visit to some of our friends in Europe where there is much concern about the failure of that agreement to be signed. It was also followed that weekend by Mr. Putin's continued barrage of attacking apartments, civilian targets, and other areas in Ukraine, not a good weekend for peace in Ukraine or world peace. The President is trying to get a peace deal in Ukraine, and I certainly hope we will be able to get this back on the rails.

I would like to hear your views on the potential there. Your views on President Trump's crystal-clear Iran policy seem to have hardened considerably, yet your views on Taiwan's importance to the United States seems to have softened considerably. I hope we can clarify those views today. Your views on the relevance of nuclear weapons in the next decade remain unclear to me. I would appreciate your comments on each of those issues.

Mr. Colby, you have spoken frequently to audiences who are skeptical of the idea that U.S. peace and prosperity requires us to wield U.S. power abroad. I am grateful that you have led those discussions, discussions that U.S. foreign policy professionals do not like having. I expect your points on the limits of U.S. power remain nuanced and complimentary to the President's peace-through-strength agenda, and it will be crystal clear that you will speak for the President in this regard.

If you are focused on finding innovative ways to blend America's comparative advantages in this global fight against Chinese communists, I strongly believe you will be a boon to the President and to the United States of America. I would like to hear your strategic vision for the next 4 years. I would like to hear your comments on the plans I have released for rebuilding and reforming the military.

In confirming Secretary Hegseth, we charged him with focusing on four guiding principles as he assumed office, lethality, efficiency, speed, and accountability. I also appreciate the easy access that he and I have had in conversations with each other since his confirmation. As Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, I would like to know how you plan to execute in these four areas to support President Trump's peace-through-strength agenda.

Thank you very much for being here. We look forward to your testimony.

I now recognize Ranking Member Reed for his opening remarks.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Colby, congratulations on your nomination, and welcome to today's hearing. I would also like to recognize your wife, Susana, and sons, Orlando and Thomas, and your parents, siblings, and family members with us today. I would also, in anticipation of his arrival, like to welcome the Vice President and certainly my colleague, Senator Banks. Thank you.

Mr. Colby, you have been nominated to be the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, or the USDP. The USDP serves as a principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense and plays a critical role in developing long-term strategic policies of the Department. If confirmed, you would lead defense policy at a consequential time. There is a common understanding that the future of our national security is tied significantly to our competition with China. This competition is occurring across every field of national power—military, economic, political, technological, and more—and across every region of the world.

Mr. Colby, as you have written extensively, America's success in this competition will depend on our credibility in the eyes of our allies and our adversaries. If our allies in the Indo-Pacific perceive us to be untrustworthy or unreliable, they will hesitate to stand with us when we need them. If China believes that we can be worn down through cajoling or bullying, they will take bold risks.

I am deeply concerned that the Trump administration is surrendering our credibility at this very moment. For 3 years, the United States has stood with Ukraine and with our NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] allies in the face of Vladimir Putin's unprovoked, bloody assault on Ukraine. Indeed, for the better part of a century, we have stood against Russia's aggression and been the global standard-bearer of democracy. But now, after barely a month in office, President Trump has attacked this legacy and signaled he would rather align the United States with Vladimir Putin than our democratic allies. Make no mistake, China is watching.

We should be proud that the United States has led a formidable group of nations to support Ukraine and defend democracy on the world stage. However, President Trump seems eager to strike a

deal with Vladimir Putin at any cost, even conceding our most valuable points of leverage before reaching the negotiating table. His recent claim that Ukraine, not Russia, started this war is offensive, and his attacks against President Zelensky are badly misguided. Frankly, the spectacle in the Oval Office last week was a failure of American leadership. President Zelensky and the people of Ukraine are fighting for their very lives, and to suggest that they are ungrateful for American aid is absurd.

Many of my colleagues and I, including those here today, have traveled to Ukraine many times and seen firsthand the death and destruction wrought by Vladimir Putin against innocent people. To deride Ukraine or our allies is a mistake that only benefits Putin. Just last night, President Trump cutoff all military aid to Ukraine. Make no mistake, his callous decision will only endanger innocent Ukrainians and encourage Russia to escalate its attacks. The United States is paying with money; the Ukrainians are paying with their lives.

The Administration's actions are doing great harm to America's standing in the world, showing anyone who is paying attention that the United States can no longer be trusted. President Xi is certainly taking notice.

Mr. Colby, you have argued against United States support for Ukraine and called for steep reductions to America's role in Europe. I ask you to explain these views and how, if confirmed, you would work to repair America's standing with our allies, as well as our competitive position with respect to our adversaries.

The Department of Defense has long built its strategy around the idea of winning in an armed conflict and deterring China through military dominance. That is no longer enough. The game has changed, and our capacity for outright victory through military strength should not be our only measure of success. The Defense Department needs to better understand China's strategy for increasing its capabilities and influence, including in the so-called gray zone, below the threshold of traditional armed conflict. We must also develop new tools for competition and integrate our activities with those of our allies and partners.

Mr. Colby, you have written and spoken extensively about these concepts. You are lead author of the 2018 National Defense Strategy and have played an important role in defense policy through your previous positions in the Department and had a number of thinktanks. I would ask for your views on how the Department of Defense should pursue competition and deterrence with China, especially as it relates to the United States' relationship with Taiwan and our network of allies in the region. I would also like to know your priorities for the forthcoming round of defense policy reviews, including the next National Defense Strategy.

You have also argued that the United States must rigorously prioritize our efforts on great power competition with China, to include withdrawing forces from other theaters. I agree that we should be thoughtful and disciplined about how we use the military. That is why I am skeptical of the President's deployment of thousands of troops to the southern border and Guantanamo Bay. Border security and immigration enforcement are critical to our national security, but these current missions are dubious at best. The

Department estimates that it will spend \$1 billion to \$2 billion for unplanned border missions this year, even as illegal migrant encounters are at the lowest level since August 2020. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has assessed these missions in recent years and found, quote, “Separating units in order to assign a portion of them to the southwest border mission was a consistent trend in degrading readiness ratings.”

Mr. Colby, I have serious doubts about these missions. I would like to know what role you believe military forces should play in border security and whether the Defense Department should be involved in enforcing immigration policies that fall in the purview of the Department of Homeland Security and essentially law enforcement operations which posse comitatus circumscribes dramatically for the military.

Finally, you will need to reconcile your views with the current, longstanding bipartisan approach of the United States to the Middle East. The region remains extremely unstable after more than a year of violence between Israel, Hamas, Iran, and its proxies, and the fall of the Assad regime. Mr. Colby, you have advocated for a much more limited role in the region and suggested that the United States should be willing to tolerate a nuclear-armed Iran. I hope you will address your views on these issues and how you would work to advance United States national security interests in the Middle East.

If confirmed, you will lead at a challenging moment. All of our potential adversaries, including China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea, are seeking ways to undermine our interest and supplant our leadership. I would ask for your plans on how the Department can pursue every available opportunity to advance our national interest. I certainly look forward to your testimony.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member.

Before we proceed, guests and Members, including the Chair, are sternly admonished to silence all phones and electronic devices.

Mr. Vice President, I see that you have arrived and you are next on our list. Thank you very much for joining us this morning to introduce your friend and the nominee. I now turn to you for your comments. Thank you so much.

Vice President VANCE. Great. Thank you, Chairman Wicker, and thanks to the Ranking Member, Senator Reed, and thanks to all my friends from across the aisle who permit this brief intrusion into what was otherwise, I am sure, a very distinguished and interesting conversation. But I wanted to be here because I thought it was important to tell you all about my friend Bridge Colby and why I think he is important to the President’s defense policy and important to what the President is trying to accomplish with national security.

So, first, I think Bridge, more than any person I have ever spoken to, appreciates that military power, national security influence is downstream of economic power. As we have seen in so many of the conflicts that we have engaged ourselves in over the last 30 or 40 years, we cannot fight wars unless our troops have the ammunition they need. We cannot defend our own national security unless we have the tank shells, the artillery shells, and increasingly, the

drones and other advanced weapon systems that are necessary to actually fight battles when, God forbid, those battles are necessary to fight. I think Bridge has been particularly aware of and worried about the degradation of our defense industrial base and how we must rebuild it if we want to preserve our own national security.

I have had many conversations with Bridge before I was United States Senator, certainly before I was the Vice President of the United States where, in so many ways, Bridge predicted what we would be talking about 4 years down the road, 5 years down the road, 10 years down the road. He saw around corners that very few other people were seeing around. That doesn't mean he is always right about every issue or that you will agree with him on every issue, and I say that to both the Democrats and the Republicans on the Committee.

But I think that he has the type of perspective that we need so desperately in the Department of Defense. I think that his role at the Department of Defense will be incredibly important in seeing around the corners of the next 5 years and the next 10 years. That is one of the most important reasons why I think we should support his nomination at this great Committee, but obviously, support his confirmation in the U.S. Senate.

Let me say a couple of other things about Bridge, and then I will let you guys get on with the Committee hearing. First of all, Bridge is a person of incredible integrity and intellect. His educational credentials are extraordinary. But to my Democratic friends, I think you will also find he is a person who can actually work across the aisle. If you look at his long career in defense policy, he has said things that has, you know, frankly, alienated Democrats and Republicans. He has also said things that I think both Democrats and Republicans would agree with.

He obviously is a conservative. He obviously is the nominee of President Trump, and we nominated him because we think he is going to do a great job. But I think you will find that he is the kind of guy that you can engage in meaningful conversation, whatever your agreement or disagreement with his views is. Again, that is one of the things that we need to bring to the Department of Defense.

Bridge is a good guy, and I said this in the only other confirmation hearing that I actually introduced the guest, Secretary Lutnick. You need good people in government. You need people who are going to tell you the truth, who are going to look you in the eye, who are going to disagree, sometimes amicably, of course, but actually be willing to look you in the eye and have an important conversation, who you can trust to tell you what they actually think, agree or disagree, and that is the kind of person that Bridge is.

He is a great family man. He comes from a life of service, but also a family of service going back many generations, and he is the kind of guy that we need working on policy at the senior levels at the Department of Defense, and of course, that is why the President nominated him.

The final thing that I want to say about Bridge is so much of this question of rebuilding the industrial base—and I think it is one of the few areas of genuine bipartisan agreement. We may not always

agree exactly how to do it, but I think everybody pretty much agrees that we have to build the industrial base in the United States that can support the national security policy of the next generation. Whether you have a Democrat or a Republican President 20 years from now, you need to ensure that the troops who are under the command of that Commander in Chief actually have the weapons systems necessary to support themselves and to accomplish the mission.

That is not a simple matter of throwing money at the problem. That is not a simple matter of saying we need to buy more weapons. It also goes deeply into questions of procurement. How are we buying those weapons? How are we engaging with the technologists of the 21st century? Because we are never going to beat China in a war of population. They have, what, 1.3, 1.4 billion people, and we have got just north of 300 million. But what we can do is actually have the kind of technology that gives our troops and gives our people the advantage over the long haul, and that means not just buying more weapons. That means being smart about how we buy weapons in a way that enhances our technological edge and ensures that upstarts, not just the big five incumbents, but upstarts can participate in the process of procurement and of giving our troops the weapons systems that they need.

So I think that we need to think deeply about these questions. I think that President Trump and the Department of Defense, Secretary Hegseth on down are thinking deeply about these questions. Bridge Colby is an important part not just of thinking about these questions, but also accomplishing important policy.

So with all respect to all of you, and knowing that all of you will make up your own minds, I highly encourage you to give Bridge Colby your stamp of approval. He is a good guy, he is a smart guy, and he will do a good job for the United States of America.

Thank you all for having me.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very, very much, Mr. Vice President. We appreciate you being here, and I know you are busy, but we certainly would be delighted to have you stay around. Thank you so much.

Senator Banks—

Senator BANKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER.—can you top that?

Senator BANKS. It is hard to follow our good friend.

Chairman WICKER. You are recognized, sir.

Senator BANKS. Thank you, Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, fellow Members of the most important Committee in the entire Congress, the Senate Armed Services Committee. It is good to be with all of you today to introduce my friend Elbridge Colby, the President's choice to be the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy at the Pentagon.

I have known Elbridge Colby, or Bridge, for a very long time. I got to know him in the first Trump term, but he became an advisor to me when I served on the House Armed Services Committee, and even more importantly, he became deeply involved in the Republican Study Committee that I chaired, the largest caucus on Capitol Hill in the House, helping us to understand the world, how to talk about it, what to do about the complex issues around the world.

The threats that we face around the world are increasingly sophisticated, but I am confident that with Bridge in charge of developing and implementing our defense strategy, America will be wholly prepared. Bridge already knows his way around the Pentagon from his time as a senior official in OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] policy in the first Trump term, the very office, by the way, that we are considering his nomination for today. He is eminently qualified for this role.

While in OSD, he co-led and was the key architect of the development of President Trump's 2018 National Defense Strategy. After 2 decades of prioritizing wars in the Middle East, the National Defense Strategy under Bridge and the first Trump administration rightly refocused the United States military on great power competition with China and maintaining American superiority in the Pacific. Bridge has been a leader in courageously stating this truth: America's focus must be on the military threat from communist China, and the United States and our allies are running out of time to act on it.

Bridge has written numerous reports and articles on foreign policy and defense, as well as his widely studied book, *The Strategy of Denial*, which I will admit is dry but incredibly substantive. I recommend that every Member of this Committee read his book. I believe his answers to your question today will underline his expertise, his unique qualifications for this role and this position. He will make an excellent Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and I look forward to working with all of you as fellow Members of this Committee to swiftly confirm his nomination and get him on the job. You won't be disappointed.

Mr. Chairman, thank you. It is an honor to be with all of you today.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very, very much, Senator Banks. You are welcome to resume your seat or to stay there at the desk. But thank you very much, and again, our thanks to our Vice President.

Mr. Colby, you are now recognized for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF ELBRIDGE A. COLBY, TO BE UNDER
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY**

Mr. COLBY. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished Members of the Armed Services Committee, it is an exceptional personal honor to appear before you today to be considered for the position of Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. I would like to begin by expressing my deep gratitude to President Trump for nominating me for this role. I am committed to implementing his vision of a defense and foreign policy of putting Americans' interests first and of peace through strength. I am deeply honored by the President's confidence in me.

Thank you in particular to Vice President Vance for his exceptionally kind introduction and his confidence. I am profoundly honored by his support and presence here today.

Thank you very much to Senator Jim Banks for his incredibly generous introduction. I am deeply honored as well.

I would also like to express my great gratitude to Secretary of Defense Hegseth for his support and confidence.

I would also like to thank the members of this Committee for their consideration. I very much appreciated my engagement with you and your staffs over the last weeks and have learned a great deal. If confirmed, I would look forward to deepening this engagement.

Finally, I would like especially to express my personal thanks to my family for their love and support, especially to my wife, Susana, and our sons, Orlando and Thomas, seated behind me. I would also like to thank my parents, Jonathan and Susan, as well as other family members and friends present here today, as well as the family and friends who are not here but have supported me in this process and throughout my life and career.

Members of this Committee, with your permission, I will keep my opening remarks brief.

The position of Under Secretary of Defense for Policy is a role that comes with genuinely profound and grave responsibilities, and my nomination comes at a time, as this Committee has eloquently laid out, of deep peril for our country. Peace and the protection of American interests in the world cannot be assumed. There is a real risk of major war, and we cannot afford to lose one. I recognize these realities in my bones. It is my great hope that we can get through the coming years peacefully with strength in ways that put us and our alliances on a stronger and more sustainable footing. If confirmed, I would do all in my power to make it so.

I know some of you will have different views on important issues, but I can assure you of several things—that I am deeply committed to a foreign and defense policy that realistically protects and advances all Americans' security, freedoms, and prosperity; that I am willing and ready to engage with those who disagree with me and adapt my views based on persuasive arguments and the facts; that I value our alliances deeply, even as I think they must be adapted; and that I love our great country and will put its interests first and foremost.

If confirmed, I pledge to strive with every fiber to meet the grave responsibilities of this important office with judgment, commitment, and determination. I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Elbridge A. Colby follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY ELBRIDGE A. COLBY

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished Members of the Armed Services Committee:

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Finally, I would like especially to express my personal thanks to my family for their love and support—especially to my wife Susana and our sons Orlando and

Thomas, seated behind me. I would also like to thank my parents Jonathan and Susan as well as other family members present here today, as well as the family and friends who are not here but have supported me in this process and throughout my life and career.

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If confirmed, I pledge to strive with every fiber to meet the grave responsibilities of this important office with judgment, commitment, and determination.

I look forward to your questions.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. At this point, I am required to ask you a number of questions, which we ask all nominees.

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

Mr. COLBY. I have, Senator.

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

Mr. COLBY. I have not, Senator.

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. Mr. Colby, do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify before this Committee when requested?

Mr. COLBY. I do, Senator.

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 requester regarding the basis for any good-faith delay or denial on your part in providing such records?

Mr. COLBY. I do, Senator.

Chairman WICKER. 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. COLBY. I will, Senator.

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

Mr. COLBY. I will, Senator.

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

Mr. COLBY. They will, Senator.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much.

Now, we are going to begin a round questions limited to 5 minutes per Member, and I am going to hold myself as Chair to that 5 minutes also.

So at this point, let me begin by asking about a couple of policy advisors that are already in place. One of your advisors, if confirmed, would be Mr. Michael Dimino. You did not choose Mr. Dimino for that—

Mr. COLBY. Senator, no, I was not the hiring person—

Chairman WICKER. He said recently, quote, “There are no vital or existential United States interests in the Middle East,” unquote. Mr. Colby, to your understanding, does that reflect the President’s policy in the Middle East?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, no, I think that the President has made clear that we do have really important interests in the Middle East.

Chairman WICKER. Does Mr. Dimino’s policy pronouncement reflect your own views?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, no, he does not speak for me, and I think I have a number of views that differ materially from his from what I understand just in public reporting.

Chairman WICKER. Another policy advisor is Mr. Andrew Byers. He is an advisor on southeast Asia. He believes that thinking about Communist China through the lens of deterrence is wrong. He thinks maybe we should give up what he calls, quote, “belligerent” policies toward China and see if they will reciprocate. He apparently thinks pressing Beijing on trade is a bad idea. So, Mr. Colby, does that reflect President Trump’s policy on China in your view?

Mr. COLBY. It does not, Senator, and I would say that it does not reflect mine. I mean, as I think Senator Banks and the Vice President kindly mentioned, I wrote a book really focused on the lens of deterrence. Of course, as the Vice President I think rightly mentioned, we also need to be thinking about the economic dimension, and, of course, the Administration is already taking measures in that direction. Again, I am not intimately familiar with his work, but it seems like a quite different perspective than my own.

Chairman WICKER. I do understand that you have made no determination as to whether Mr. Dimino and/or Mr. Byers will be retained in those positions?

Mr. COLBY. Sir, as part of not presuming, my understanding is that I should not be even sort of thinking in that way. Senator, what I would say is that, if confirmed, obviously, I would be only one person in a chain, including, of course, the Secretary of Defense, the Presidential personnel office, and ultimately, the President, the Vice President, and so forth. But what I would commit to you is that anybody in my organization, if I am confirmed, should be in line with the President’s agenda, including the issues that you mentioned.

Chairman WICKER. Very well.

Mr. COLBY. Yes.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you. Mr. Colby, as I mentioned in my opening statement, I have appreciated what I view as your clear articulation of the core United States interest in Taiwan, which are too infrequently discussed in the public here in America. As you wrote in American Compass last year, quote, “Nothing that could happen abroad is more plausibly and gravely threatening to Americans than China invading Taiwan,” unquote. Your 2022 article at Stanford has about as good a one-paragraph summary of our interest in Taiwan as I have seen, yet in November of last year, some people believe your position may have taken a marked turn as you wrote, quote, “America has a strong interest in defending Taiwan, but Americans could survive without it.”

Mr. Colby, I will let you respond to that. But specifically, can the United States enjoy a golden age for America with increasing prosperity for our citizens in this century if we fail to deter China and Taiwan, or worse yet, lose that war?

Mr. COLBY. Well, thanks, Senator. Losing Taiwan, Taiwan’s fall would be a disaster for American interests. The underlying logic behind my position is that the military balance vis-à-vis China, as you, sir, and your fellow Committee Members have amply and eloquently pointed out, has deteriorated dramatically. What I have been trying to shoot a signal flare over is that it is vital for us to focus and enable our own forces for an effective and reasonable defense of Taiwan, and for the Taiwanese, as well as the Japanese, to do more.

So my position in terms of the value of Taiwan is consistent, but what I am very fearful of, Senator—and I think this is agreed across Administrations of both parties—is that, you know, the military balance has declined. So I am trying to avoid a situation in which, because we are not adequately prepared, we get in a situation—the analogy I like to use is Winston Churchill in 1940 wanting to send Spitfires and Hurricanes to the Battle of France, but Marshall Dowding saying, if we do that, we are not going to be prepared to be able to defend the Home Islands. That is sort of an extreme example, but that is what we are—

Chairman WICKER. How soon will it—

Mr. COLBY.—trying to avoid.

Chairman WICKER.—take us to get prepared?

Mr. COLBY. Essentially, my No. 1, or one of my very top priorities, if confirmed, to try to get us prepared as quickly as possible, and then over the medium and longer term as well, Senator.

Chairman WICKER. You and I are absolutely united on that.

Mr. COLBY. Great.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much.

Chairman REED.

Senator REED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Colby, you have advocated reduction in support for Ukraine, which you characterize as a distraction from Taiwan. Yet former CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] Director Bill Burns, one of the most astute commentators about Russia, former Ambassador, CIA Director, stated that no one is watching United States support for Ukraine more closely than Chinese leaders, and, quote, “One of the surest ways to rekindle Chinese perceptions of American fecklessness and stoke Chinese aggressiveness would be to abandon

support for Ukraine.” So what message are the President’s actions sending?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, I would say a couple things. One, my arguments about Ukraine have been based on the need for strategic prioritization. I don’t contest the fact that the Chinese are looking at what we are doing in Ukraine at all. But fundamentally, Senator, in my view—and I think it should be of particular interest to this Committee, sir—is that we have to have the military capabilities in Asia or relevant to Asia to be able to conduct a local defense of Taiwan at a cost and level of risk that the American people are prepared to tolerate. That has been my main focus.

My aspiration, if I would put another and to kind of build on what the Vice President was saying, a longer-term top priority for me, if confirmed, would be to revivify our defense industrial base so that we are no longer in a position where our defense industrial base cannot produce at levels where we can resource in multiple theaters at the level that we need. That is where we want to get back to.

Senator REED. Well, I don’t think there is a dispute about reinvigorating the industrial base. I think, though, there is, from astute personalities like Bill Burns, the fear that we are sending dramatically the wrong lesson. Indeed, on November 2023 you stated, quote, “Invasion of the Ukraine is an evil act by the Russians, and I morally support the Ukrainian defense.” Do you still agree with that statement?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, I stand by my record, but at this point, I think there is a very delicate diplomatic process going on where the President is rightfully trying to resuscitate the peace process, and I don’t think it would be appropriate for me to weigh in on the specific case—

Senator REED. Well, the President indicated the Russians invaded Ukraine, which is completely erroneous, and that Zelensky is a dictator, which is, I think, also erroneous. We are in an awkward situation now. He is cutting every sort of tool we have, and that is not the way to negotiate. I don’t think that was in *The Art of the Deal*. So I think we are in a very serious situation.

Let me change topics for a moment. General Mattis, who I respect immensely as former Secretary of Defense and as a marine, stated, “If you don’t fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition,” which raises the question of the wisdom of eviscerating the USAID [United States Agency for International Development]. In many places in the world—and you know this—that is the only American presence. That is the counterpoint to Chinese incursions all across the globe, and now we have put them out of business. It has been indicated that this will cause millions of unnecessary deaths, particularly the children and women, and it seems to be undercutting our power in the world, our soft power. Your thoughts?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, I think it is certainly very important to have an effective and efficient diplomatic arm, the State Department, as well as a development arm, and I would certainly support that. It would not be within my purview, obviously, a number of the issues that you are raising, if confirmed, but I certainly support a tight interaction and integration with the other arms of national

power, especially in an era as our—you know, as we said in Secretary Mattis' defense strategy where we are no longer in a kind of unipolar militarily dominant situation.

Senator REED. With respect to NATO, I mean, one of the fallouts from our Ukrainian decisions over the last few days is that our European allies feel essentially abandoned, that the NATO alliance is as fragile as it has ever been. As we all recognize, NATO was the key since 1949 to our ability to stabilize the world and to promote a democratic and economic agenda that favored the West, and that is in danger now.

The President, in his last term, was insisting on 2 percent or everybody at NATO—now it is more—almost like a landlord saying, I am raising the rent unless you do something, something, something. Do you believe the NATO alliance has made us stronger and that if it is jeopardized, we will be in serious trouble?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, I believe that the NATO alliance has been an exceptionally successful alliance, but I think if we are going to sustain it, it needs to move in the direction that President Trump is leading it in and where I think the Europeans are finally moving. If you look at Chancellor Merz, who is coming in in Germany, or President Macron or Prime Minister Starmer, they are not only spending more—2 percent is manifestly inadequate. General Cavoli has said that. Many others have said that. They need to see real combat capabilities. The conversation has materially improved in recent months and over the last few years where we can get NATO into a more balanced fashion. Senator, I believe that that is much more consistent with the model of NATO that existed during the cold war, rather than the post-cold war model, which is too heavily lopsided in American responsibility, and it needs to change to be sustained.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Colby.

Mr. COLBY. Thanks.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Senator Reed. Mr. Colby, welcome.

Mr. COLBY. Thank you.

Senator FISCHER. Welcome to you—

Mr. COLBY. Thanks, Senator.

Senator FISCHER.—and your family and friends.

In your answers to the Committee's advanced policy questions, you stated that, quote, "U.S. nuclear forces underpin our entire deterrence and defense posture," end quote, and that, quote, "Ensuring we retain a modern, capable, and effective nuclear deterrent should be our top priority," end quote. I agree with those statements. Nuclear deterrence must be the foundation for any defense strategy.

However, this foundation is threatened because of decades of underinvestment and poor management. I am confident this Administration can correct the course of our modernization programs, both through adequate resourcing and by approving our acquisition strategies for Sentinel, *Columbia*, and B-21.

Mr. Colby, if confirmed, will you commit to working with this Committee to fully modernize all aspects of our nuclear triad and continuing the work of the first Trump administration to rebuild our Nation's most important military capabilities?

Mr. COLBY. I do, Senator.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Russia has nearly completed their modernization of all of their nuclear forces, and China is modernizing, and they are growing their arsenal at a breathtaking speed, yet the combination of an industrial base that we continually worry about in this country and overly complicated acquisition policies, it holds us back from keeping pace. You have talked about that. The Vice President talked about that in his introduction to you as well. If confirmed, what policies would you recommend to increase the overall capacity of that industrial base?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, I think actually a number of the things that the Vice President has spoken about and the President, which is that a broader reindustrialization, in my view, is necessary to fix a lot of the defense industrial base issues, not just with the nuclear forces, as critical as they are, but also with the broader conventional forces as well. Which is to say—and I know this Committee has drawn attention to this problem—that despite the investment of money, often the results are less than people would like to see, for instance, because of workforce issues.

So, if confirmed, I wouldn't approach the problem with saying I have all of the particular policy ideas set, and I am going to—you know, in terms of improving the industrial production. But what I would see my role as making very clear that revamping and restoring a really healthy and robust defense industrial base is absolutely a national priority.

What I have said as a private commentator, but I believe as a public official, if confirmed, is that we kind of need a national mobilization of our defense industrial base. We need to be able to get better results, and it seems to me that is something that could get wide agreement.

Senator FISCHER. Do you have in mind any acquisition policies that you would revamp at this point in time, that you would recommend changing or even eliminating?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, at this point, I wouldn't have any specific ones. I know a lot of those would be under the purview of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and other, you know, the Service Secretaries and so forth. I would be delighted to dive into that issue further and give you a more concrete answer, but, again, I would see my role, if confirmed as the USDP, to kind of drive the overall strategic direction that we need to get better results out of our defense industrial base.

Senator FISCHER. Should we utilize the Defense Production Act in order to move forward?

Mr. COLBY. I think that absolutely would make—and deregulation in general at that level, I think all options should be on the table, including things that seem pretty dramatic because I think, as the Chairman rightly said, we live in a very dramatic situation and world.

Senator FISCHER. The Department is also modernizing our NC3, which the Strategic Forces Subcommittee calls the fourth leg of our triad. If confirmed, will you ensure that this effort receives the necessary attention and the resources that it needs?

Mr. COLBY. Yes, I will.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Would you prioritize it, along with our triad, as the top priority of the Department?

Mr. COLBY. Certainly. I mean, I think command and control is absolutely essential, and when we are living in a world of much more capable cyber capabilities, not to mention missile threats, not just the traditional strategic strike threats, but also a range of different threats that are evolving very quickly, we have to absolutely pay really critical attention to NC3.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Colby.

Mr. COLBY. Thank you.

Senator FISCHER.

[Presiding.] Senator Gillibrand, you are recognized.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Thank you for appearing here. Thank you for bringing your family. This is a very significant role you are undertaking that takes enormous amounts of responsibility and thoughtful judgment.

I want to talk about the threats we are facing from around the globe. We have continued to see cyber threats from Russia. We had solar winds. We had the Colonial Pipeline compromise. We had the 2016 effort to undermine our electoral infrastructure. It was reported last week that Secretary Hegseth ordered a halt on Cyber Comm's offensive operations against Russia. We have not heard anything from Russia that they are similarly disarming. What advice will you give to President Trump with regard to how to keep the United States safe from Russian attacks through cyber and other means?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, I haven't seen the actual document, so I only have what I am going on based on public reporting, but my recommendation would be that we should maintain the highest level of cyber vigilance and capability vis-à-vis Russia, as well as others like China.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Would you unilaterally disarm and not use offensive operations?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, I don't know exactly what is going on. I couldn't comment about what is going on, but generally, I think these reciprocal steps in the sort of logic of arms control—or, excuse me, steps should be reciprocated credibly.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Correct. Would you consider Russia to be postured as an adversary or as an ally?

Mr. COLBY. From a military point of view, from a defense point of view, Senator, as I put it in my responses to the advanced policy questions, Russia presents a significant military threat to Europe, and they are a significant military threat to the Homeland as well. I think from a defense point of view, we need to regard that in a very clear-eyed way.

At the same time, as an overall strategy, I think that can support and be compatible with an effort to diminish the potential for direct confrontation with Russia in the same way with China as well.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Who started the war in Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, as I said earlier, I think this is a very delicate diplomatic time. I have spoken about this in the past. I would hate to be in a situation of disrupting or inhibiting progress on peace. I think the President and the Vice President have been very

clear that words matter, and I don't think it is appropriate for me to be commenting on these delicate topics.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Given that you won't make a public statement with regard to it, will you tell this Committee that you will advise President Trump on the truth of all matters?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, I absolutely would commit to you that I would tell the truth in the conduct of my duties, if confirmed.

Senator GILLIBRAND. With regard to China, you are aware of Volt Typhoon, you are aware of Salt Typhoon, you are aware of Flax Typhoon. Do you agree that China poses a cyber threat to the United States and has prepositioned cyber threats around the United States to be able to use them, should and when it needs to, in any conflict with regard to Taiwan?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, I should say that my information is based on public reporting, but based on what you are saying, that is consistent with my understanding, and so I would agree with your assessment.

Senator GILLIBRAND. What advice will you give to President Trump with regard to how to posture appropriately to protect against incursions by China to the United States' national security?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, this is something that I would want to dive much more deeply in. Cyber is obviously an area where a lot of the information is classified, and I have not had access to that in some time, certainly not on the cyber issue. What I would say, Senator—and I talked about this in my responses to the advanced policy questions, is I would bring my background in the area of deterrence and these kinds of areas, denial and so forth, to bring an integrated approach that includes things like resilience, defenses, but also cyber offensive operations and capabilities, intelligence gathering, and so forth. My understanding is there has been good work on this in previous years that can be built on, but there could be some sensible policy changes that are on the table that could be worth taking. Again, I don't know enough to say specifically, though, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. I would be interested in what sensible policy changes you are interested in. I am highly concerned that, should China decide to invade Taiwan, that we haven't done enough cyber defense domestically to prevent the type of chaos that these types of attacks have already created, whether it is Salt Typhoon or Volt Typhoon or Flax Typhoon. Every single one of them is designed to create enormous chaos, instability, and would create decisionmaking that would be, at a minimum, challenging and chaotic.

Mr. COLBY. Senator, I fully share your concerns based on what I am seeing. Not only would it cause chaos, but it could specifically inhibit or, you know, break down U.S. military operations, so I share your alarm. I just have not, you know, read into a lot of the real specifics.

Senator GILLIBRAND. I would like to work with you on what your plan will be for cybersecurity for both incursions from Russia, from China going forward.

Then my last statement is, can you just speak briefly about your view with regard to Iran and the threat they pose to the United States and our allies?

Mr. COLBY. I would welcome working with you on cyber. Just briefly, I will say that Iran does pose a very severe threat to the United States and our allies, especially our key ally, Israel. I think I will have a chance to elaborate on that, given the time situation.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. Senator Cotton.

Senator COTTON. Mr. Colby, welcome. Let's talk about the threat of a nuclear Iran. I have some concerns about what you have said in the past, namely, that if we had to choose between hoping to contain a nuclear Iran and preventing Iran with military force from getting nukes that we should tolerate a nuclear Iran and try to contain it. For instance, you have written that, quote, "Containing a nuclear Iran is an eminently plausible and practical objective." You have approvingly cited the view that, quote, "The only thing worse than the prospect of an Iran armed with nuclear weapons would be the consequences of using force to try to stop them."

That is certainly not my view, but more importantly, it is not President Trump's policy. He has said for more than a decade that Iran cannot be allowed to get new nuclear weapons. He declared in a national security Presidential memorandum last month that a nuclear Iran, quote, "poses an existential danger" to the United States and can never be allowed to acquire or develop nuclear weapons. In your written answers to the Committee's advanced questions, you now seem to echo President Trump's policy. You wrote, for example, "The United States should deny Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon." So it seems that we all agree that Iran cannot be allowed to get nukes. The question is how to stop them.

Let me be clear up front on a couple points. First, I think everyone would welcome a diplomatic deal in which Iran completely turns over its nuclear program, as Libya did in 2003; and second, I don't think anyone here advocates for invading and occupying Iran for a decade to stop its nuclear program. I certainly don't. But here is the question. Diplomacy fails, Iran is racing to a bomb. We have a choice. Tolerate a nuclear Iran and hope to contain it; use military force to stop Iran from going nuclear. In that case, will you commit to providing the President with credible, realistic military options to stop Iran from going nuclear?

Mr. COLBY. I do commit to that, Senator.

Senator COTTON. To be more precise, those credible and realistic options are more than simply saying we can give Israel some bombs, and they can take care of it.

Mr. COLBY. Yes, I agree with you, Senator.

Senator COTTON. It is well known that Israel lacks certain military capabilities that we have such as aerial refueling tankers and heavy bombers with deep penetrating ordinance. Do you believe that at least one option for the President to consider how to stop Iran from going nuclear should be to use our tankers and our bombers, whether in tandem with Israel or in the lead?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, I wouldn't want to get ahead of the President on specific decisions, but I think those are the kinds of things that should be absolutely part of the discussion. If I were confirmed, those would certainly be the kinds of things that I would raise for the consideration of the Secretary and ultimately the President.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. And to be clear about why this is so important to us, to the United States, not just to Israel or our Arab friends, why President Trump says a nuclear Iran is an existential danger to us, you agree that it is an existential danger, not just a severe danger, as you said in response to Senator Gillibrand, or a significant one, as you said in your written answers?

Mr. COLBY. Yes, a nuclear-armed Iran, especially, Senator, given, as we have discussed, that they have looked into or we know they have worked on ICBM [Intercontinental Ballistic Missile] range capabilities and other kinds of capabilities that would pose an existential threat to—

Senator COTTON. Correct.

Mr. COLBY.—the United States.

Senator COTTON. So they have a space launch program, which is flimsy cover for an intercontinental missile program, that could be used to hit us here in Washington, in Little Rock, or elsewhere in the continental United States. It is an immediate threat to Israel and our Arab friends, but it is a threat in the not-too-distant future, probably in just a couple of years, to the United States.

Mr. COLBY. Senator, I don't have access to the intelligence information, but that sounds very consistent to me.

Senator COTTON. Do you agree that providing President Trump with those credible military options is actually one way to increase leverage to have an airtight diplomatic deal and—

Mr. COLBY. Yes, I do agree.

Senator COTTON.—that a lack of military options would make it harder to get a deal?

Mr. COLBY. I do. I agree with that.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. I want to turn briefly to Taiwan. You have said here today and in your past writings that Taiwan is a critical matter for us. You wrote in 2016 that you thought we should give explicit security guarantees to Taiwan, reversing a decades-old policy of strategic ambiguity. You opined in the same way in 2020 in response to a hearing in the House of Representatives. Over the past couple years, you have started to say, as Senator Wicker pointed out earlier, that Taiwan is a vital interest, but it is not an existential interest to us, or it is not essential to us. It seems that you have changed your thoughts somewhat in the last couple years. That is not, I suspect, because of Taiwan's defense spending, which, though still inadequate, I agree has been trending upward for 7 straight years. So could you explain to us why in the last few years your views seem to have softened somewhat about the defense of Taiwan?

Mr. COLBY. Absolutely, Senator. I have always said that Taiwan is very important to the United States, but, as you said, it is not an existential interest. It is very important the core American interest is in denying China regional hegemony. What has changed, Senator, as we discussed, is the dramatic deterioration in the military balance. So if I could use the Churchill example again, it is different to engage in a futile and overly costly effort that would destroy our military. I know you have written very eloquently about this danger in your recent book.

The other point that I would say, Senator, is that I believe that we actually have implicitly—our relationship and our commitment

to Taiwan is largely implicit or indirect or customary. We actually have specified our commitment through things like the designation of Taiwan as the pacing scenario for the Department. So my view that the combination of the greater threat from China and the lack of preparedness on our part, I have a different assessment with respect, Senator, about Taiwan's efforts. I think, actually, as a proportion of GDP [gross domestic product], it is well below 3 percent. I agree with President Trump that they should be more like 10 percent or at least something in that ballpark, really focused on their defense, so we need to properly incentivize them. So together, that means that my focus has been, again, with the shooting-the-flare metaphor I used earlier, Senator, to get Taiwan motivated to avoid precipitating a conflict that is not necessary with Beijing and giving us time and space to be able to try to rectify this problem because that is my goal, Senator.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, Mr. Colby, to you and your family. I ask the following two initial questions with relevance to fitness to serve. So I will ask you, 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. COLBY. I have not, Senator.

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

Mr. COLBY. I have not, Senator.

Senator HIRONO. I think it is interesting that you would not say whether Russia invaded Ukraine and saying that this is a complicated kind of a situation right now. But, you know, I think I also heard you say that you would give the President your best advice, regardless of what you think he might want to hear. So I am going to ask you a simple question relating to whether Russian military forces invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Did Russian forces cross the border and invade Ukraine, yes or no?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, you are describing a factual reality that is demonstrably true.

Senator HIRONO. Yes, so that would mean that Ukraine invaded—I am sorry, Russia invaded Ukraine, so that was a question that you would not answer. I think that is pretty important because we care about what Xi Jinping thinks about what this President does and thinks, and if Xi Jinping thinks that we have a President who does not separate fact from fiction such as who invaded Ukraine, I would think that maybe President Xi has some conclusions that he would draw maybe having to do with, as our Ranking Member said, United States fecklessness.

I also think that one of the reasons that our NATO allies are increasing their spending on military is that they do not think that they have a particularly stable partner in the U.S., and therefore, they better look to their own interests because they can no longer rely on the U.S. I think that is a very bad situation for the United States to be in, especially as we identify China as a pacing threat and also whatever Russia is thinking along these lines. Clearly, they think that they now have a friend in the President.

I don't think that helps us vis-à-vis our strength regarding Russia, regarding China. In fact, I think that we are placing ourselves in a very weakened position with regard to how we are viewed by our adversaries—that would be China, as well as Russia—and our allies, like not a good situation to be in. We need a President who can separate fact from fiction.

Let me move on. Since the Administration has identified China as a pacing threat and the importance of INDOPACOM to face that threat, would you agree with that?

Mr. COLBY. Yes, I think the Department has identified China as the pacing threat, as I understand—

Senator HIRONO. So—

Mr. COLBY.—from the previous Administration.

Senator HIRONO. But INDOPACOM provided Congress with an \$11 billion unfunded priorities list, and this says to me that there is a misalignment of our funding decisions and strategy if we consider INDOPACOM to be a priority, and yet you have INDOPACOM putting forward an \$11 billion unfunded priorities. What would you do to decrease the unfunded priorities and align our strategy and the importance of INDOPACOM with the resources that it gets? And would you agree that maybe we should provide INDOPACOM with more direct input into the Department's budgeting and resourcing priorities—

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, what I would like to say is—

Senator HIRONO.—process?

Mr. COLBY.—if I may, and I think this is exactly the kind of baseline reality that I think so much of my strategic argumentation proceeds from. A lot of what I am saying is that many of us in the public debate and so forth are acting as if we can do everything, but the reality is that there is an \$11 billion unfunded priority list from INDOPACOM. Realistically, I bet the real deficit is even higher, given that that is just what came out.

So, Senator, if confirmed, I would make it an absolute priority, given the priority that China must get across Administrations. I think this is now a matter of strategic consensus to try to not only drive that down, but to, you know, reform the Department and reprioritize it to actually go through and carry out the strategic shift that has been talked about in some ways since probably Bob Work was Deputy Secretary of Defense at the end of the Obama administration.

Senator HIRONO. So would you agree that INDOPACOM, that command should be provided with more direct input into the Department's budgeting and resourcing process?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, I don't have enough information to say specifically, organizationally, where I would fall on that, but certainly, that perspective needs to get, I would say, an elevated perspective.

Senator HIRONO. I hope so because an \$11 billion unfunded priority, that is the largest unfunded—

Mr. COLBY. Indeed.

Senator HIRONO.—priority list of any of our combatant commands.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, and let me observe, Mr. Colby, that I have been somewhat critical of the COCOMs that have not

come forward with realistic unfunded requirements, and so I appreciate the exchange which you and Senator Hirono just had.

Our next member is Senator Rounds. You are recognized.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Colby, first of all, I really appreciated the time that I spent with you in my office. I appreciated your comments and thoughts. To your family, thank you for allowing him to participate in this. It is going to mean a lot of time away, but it is the right thing to do.

Mr. Colby, there is always an opportunity to look ahead and to see long term what our needs are going to be in this country, particularly with the defense of our Nation. Now that we recognize five different domains—air, land, sea, space, and cyber space—we also recognize that new ways of defending our country are needed as well. Space-based assets are one of those in which, as the President has indicated, he would love to have a Golden Dome over our country or over the communities within our country. I don't think that is farfetched, and in fact, I think it is something that we have really got to consider. Today, we have systems along our coastlines that protect many of our cities. Hawaii, as an example, is protected with destroyers that have radar capabilities and so forth.

If the President were to be successful in creating an Iron Dome or a Golden Dome, he not only needs space-based assets, but he also needs land-based assets as well that require the use of certain parts of the spectrum for radar purposes. This Committee would be shocked if I didn't bring this up with someone in front of us today that is going to have something to say about the use of this spectrum in the future. We talked about this in my office. Forcing the Department of Defense, as some people have suggested, to vacate any portion of the 3.1 to 3.45 gigahertz band of the spectrum would have severe consequences on our warfighting capabilities, including homeland defense missions, and force protection for our deployed forces. It is also that part of the spectrum that any land-based system would use to identify incoming weapons using radar.

If confirmed, will you advocate for protecting the Department of Defense's warfighting systems that require spectrum to function optimally, including the radars that will make President Trump's Golden Dome possible?

Mr. COLBY. I will, Senator.

Senator ROUNDS. If confirmed, will you speak candidly with Congress on the effects of any spectrum-related policies entertained by the interagency that may have an effect on the Department of Defense's capabilities to use those portions of the spectrum that they currently control?

Mr. COLBY. I will, Senator.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir. Sir, also, in my office, you have—and I considered very courageously—you have called for the genuine focus on countering China as the principal threat to the United States and providing the commensurate resources to INDOPACOM. In my office, we discussed the fact that in the event the United States and China engage in hostilities, adversaries like Russia and Iran will seek to press their own advantage in Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

It is for that purpose of the NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act] currently requires a review to see whether or not we are actually capable and what our needs are to actually be able to sustain a war on more than one front. I am convinced that if we have a war on one front, we are going to have a war on two fronts. Can you talk about what your thoughts are on that and whether or not, in your role as a planner, you have to be able to respond to adversaries on more than one front?

Mr. COLBY. Well, thank you, Senator. I really appreciate that, and I fully agree with your fear. I know the Chairman and others have made this a real concern, and I applaud the Committee's focus on this point. We have to have a multifront or multi-war strategy, even though the reality is that the force planning construct of the 2022 National Defense Strategy is not a 3-war military or something. I think it is a one-and-change if I could speak informally.

So that is a real problem because not only do I think that other hostile actors could act opportunistically, I think there is a very good chance that, for instance, if China wanted to take the cosmic roll of the dice, as Harold Brown put it, that they would induce their other partners with whom they are now much more closely collaborating to also go at the same time, perhaps even before to draw us away, so we have to have a strategy for that.

I think our own strategy is to revamp our defense industrial base, the readiness, the President's very appropriate and justified desire to restore our military strength, more capable allies. So I have a different view than Senator Hirono. I think that what is happening in Europe is actually very positive that the Europeans are saying we need to do more for our own defense. I think people now, having dealt with the Europeans ad nauseam for many years on this kind of thing, I think there is finally an acceptance that there really needs—

Senator ROUNDS. But let me—

Mr. COLBY.—more to be done.

Senator ROUNDS. My time will run out, but I want to make something very clear on this.

Mr. COLBY. Sure.

Senator ROUNDS. If we are expecting that our European allies are going to be able to defend us in the case of having a war on two fronts, I don't think we can do that. I think they can help us, but I think we have to be in a position to respond to that. Would you agree?

Mr. COLBY. I think we have to be able to defend ourselves, obviously, without relying on anybody else, Senator, for sure.

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

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very, very much.

Senator KAINE.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Colby, who instigated the war in Gaza.

Mr. COLBY. Well, the October 7, the barbaric attacks against Israel were the precipitating factor.

Senator KAINE. By Hamas?

Mr. COLBY. By Hamas, yes—

Senator KAINE. So—

Mr. COLBY.—backed by Iran.

Senator KAINE.—there is a delicate cease-fire negotiation going on right now, but you didn't have any trouble saying who was the instigator of the attack. You—

Mr. COLBY. I would look at that differently, Senator, but—

Senator KAINE. You equivocated about the Russian—

Chairman WICKER. If I could stop both of my friends. There has been some talking over, and our stenographer is having trouble. So—

Mr. COLBY. Sorry, excuse me.

Chairman WICKER.—if we could avoid that?

Mr. COLBY. Pardon me, Senator.

Senator KAINE. Yes. You were introduced as a truth teller by the Vice President. That is a really important thing. My point is, if you are willing to say the truth about the Hamas invasion of Israel, I hope you wouldn't be equivocal about the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Let me ask you about two particular topics. In your advanced policy questions on page 47 and 48 you were asked a question about transnational criminal organizations (TCOs). I am curious about this. TCOs, including those transporting fentanyl, pose a direct threat to Americans. I believe this is a very important matter for the U.S. Government to address. The United States should do so in ways that are practical, results-oriented, and sustainable. In light of this, the lead organizations are likely normally to be non-DOD. You then went on to say that DOD plays an important role. Talk a little bit about the way you see the effort against TCOs, the lead role of non-DOD, and the supporting role of DOD.

Mr. COLBY. Well, thanks, Senator. I know this is a special focus of yours, so this is something I would want to learn more about, but I am, you know, very conscious that—and this gets to some of the sort of back-and-forth in other contexts, that military force is not a panacea. It is critical. It needs to be part of the President's menu of options, and in certain cases, it is absolutely necessary and can solve a problem. But things like transnational criminal organizations that are—you know, crime has been with us since we got out of the jungles or whatever. It is going to be there, but we can reduce it.

I think a big part of that is going to be, obviously, integration with the diplomatic arms, with capable partners who are willing and able to do more, for instance, in places like Latin America and other places as well. So I see DOD—I think it is important for the Department to be more aware and active in those conversations. My impression somewhat from within the Department, but often from the outside, is that that is considered to be sort of out of the Department's purview. I think it is important that the Department be there, not necessarily always saying everything is to be solved with a hammer, but to be part of that conversation.

I will say I think the kind of people who are being populated in the senior levels of the State Department and elsewhere, the National Security Council, I would believe I could have a very good conversation and integration and collaboration along those lines, as well as Congress on these issues.

Senator KAINE. And I think when you talk to the SOUTHCOM leadership, they are going to really emphasize that a lot of non-DOD assets are very important in this fight.

I want to ask you a question about AUKUS. Because I am on Foreign Relations and Armed Services, I have been pretty involved in the AUKUS [Australia, United Kingdom, United States] framework. Pillar 1 also is pretty heavily invested in Virginia. You did a tweet in August where you said “AUKUS, in principle, it is a great idea, but I have been very skeptical in practice. I remain skeptical, agnostic, as I put it, but more inclined based on new information I have gleaned. It would be crazy to have fewer SSNs *Virginia*-class in the right place and time.” Talk a little bit about your perspective on AUKUS, you know, the promise of the concept, and if there is practical skepticism, what that is.

Mr. COLBY. Yes. Thank you very much, Senator. I appreciate that. And this is another area, as I mentioned my opening statement, where new facts arise. I mean, my perspective is fundamentally, I would say, realistic or pragmatic and kind of data-driven if you want, adaptive based on new facts. You know, the idea of empowering our Australian—in some sense, perhaps our closest ally in the world. They have been with us even in our less advisable wars is the way I put it. It is a great idea for them to have attack submarines.

But the problem is, is that we are, as Secretary Rubio has said and others, there is a very real threat of a conflict in the coming years, God forbid, you know, along the first island chain. Our attack submarines, as you know well, Senator, are absolutely essential for making the defense of Taiwan or otherwise a viable and practical option, to my conversation with Senator Cotton.

So if we can produce the attack submarines in sufficient number and sufficient speed, then great. But if we can't, that becomes a very difficult problem because we don't want our servicemen and women to be in a weaker position and more vulnerable, and, God forbid, worse because they are not in the right place in the right time.

My perspective, and what I have told the Australians and also the Brits, is, if confirmed or before, I think it should be the policy of the United States Government to do everything we can to make this work. Again, as we talked about in your office, Senator, this is getting back to restoring our defense industrial capacity so that we don't have to face these awful choices but rather can be in a position where we can produce not only for ourselves, but for our allies.

Senator KAINE. So having more capacity, even if it is a joint capacity, is a good thing. We just have to be careful as we try to produce an Australian capacity that we don't end up in a time period where we are sort of less than we would otherwise be. Is that—

Mr. COLBY. Precisely, Senator.

Senator KAINE. Okay. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator ERNST.

Senator ERNST. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning to you, Mr. Colby, and I want to welcome your family as well. Thank you for joining us today. I do appreciate your ongoing service and commitment to our Department of Defense.

For years, I have been calling out the waste, fraud, and abuse that we have had at the Pentagon to ensure that our taxpayer dollars are used to support our warfighters and protecting our Nation. The Department of Defense, which controls the largest portion of our discretionary budget in the Federal Government, has never once passed a full financial audit. The failure erodes public trust and prevents efficient use of taxpayer dollars for critical defense priorities.

So, Mr. Colby, what policies will you put into place to ensure that the DOD passes an audit, as the law requires, by 2028?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, thank you very much, and thanks for your kind words for my family, as well as the other Senators.

I absolutely would regard it as a priority, if confirmed, to make sure that the policies are in place to encourage efficiency and compliance with a Federal audit. I agree with you, Senator. I mean, for the amount of money that we are spending, we should be getting better results, and I am confident—and of course, your leadership in the DOGE [Department of Government Efficiency] Caucus and so forth, this is a real potential where we could get much better results and have a better defense industrial base kind of situation, better readiness for our forces.

So I would certainly commit—I don't have a specific recommendation at this point, but I am most welcome hearing your thoughts and your team's thoughts about how to do that—

Senator ERNST. Well, thank you—

Mr. COLBY.—in consultation with—

Senator ERNST.—and I truly look forward to working with you on that issue as well.

Let's go to the Middle East. I know there has been a lot of discussion already this morning about the Middle East and Central Command. The signing of the Abraham Accords during the first Trump administration, significant achievement. It was monumental. It was a strategic breakthrough for the region. I have worked to expand this agreement through legislation in previous defense bills. We have focused on enhanced integration with our partners, which could be—the examples that we have had, air and missile defense, artificial intelligence capabilities, and maritime cooperation to counter Iran. So what are your thoughts in expanding the Abraham Accords, and how can we accomplish that?

Mr. COLBY. Well, thanks, Senator. I think the Abraham Accords were a triumph of President Trump's first term, and I am very hopeful that they can be built on in this term. I think they are an example of where diplomacy that isn't expected and maybe kind of unorthodox in certain ways can nonetheless come about. I think it offers part of the solution to dealing with Iran's regional hegemonic aspirations, its use of proxies, and so forth, although it is not exclusively so.

But, if confirmed, from a defense point of view, this is an area where there is a lot that can be done to buildup the capabilities of those like the Emiratis, the Saudis with their reforms, obviously consistent with Israel's qualitative military edge and so forth. But

I am a really big fan of the Abraham Accords and the model, and, if confirmed, I would put a lot of sort of shoulder into it.

Senator ERNST. Wonderful, and you mentioned the Emiratis, but also the Saudis as well. So thoughts on normalization, how we could assist with that with the kingdom?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, I am not fully briefed on exactly where things are. I think the more we can promote and encourage normalization—I assume you mean between Riyadh and Jerusalem—I think that would be a huge coup. I have seen reporting on that in the press. I don't know where things stand. Again, that is an area where quiet diplomacy is probably the most effective. But certainly, I think that would be an incredible thing. If I were confirmed, I would support efforts in that direction.

Senator ERNST. I do too. I think that would lend to additional stability across the Middle East by the addition of that normalization between Jerusalem and Riyadh.

So as we discussed during our in-office meeting, I have been working a very long time to combat sexual assault in our military. Secretary Hegseth committed to appointing a senior official to ensure a focus on sexual assault prevention within the Department of Defense. So, Mr. Colby, if confirmed, will you work with me on this appointment to ensure focused leadership on this critical issue? Will you commit to providing Congress with regular updates on the progress made in this area?

Mr. COLBY. I will, Senator.

Senator ERNST. Okay. I appreciate just being straightforward on that. Thank you.

So, again, just in remaining time, and I know my dear friend from Alaska will talk a little bit more about NATO, but talking about how relationships matter around the globe just in the remaining time, just give me your stance on America remaining engaged on the world stage.

Mr. COLBY. Yes, Senator, I think America should remain engaged on the world stage, and a lot of what I am trying to argue for is a way to do that, and I think it is sustainable with the threats that we face and the national resources we have and our long-term interests.

Senator ERNST. Thank you very much, Mr. Colby. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman WICKER. Mr. Colby, I think I am going to ask you to enlarge on that on the record. So at this point, I think that be helpful.

[The information referred to follows:]

Mr. COLBY. I am committed to developing a defense strategy that will serve Americans' interests in a more dangerous world. Engagement abroad is critical, but I also believe that this engagement must be more realistic, clear-eyed, and disciplined than it too often has been in the years since the collapse of the Soviet Union. As this Committee has ably laid out, our country and our allies face the risk of multi-front war. Yet our military is not ready or sized, nor our defense industry capable of sustaining, multi-front war. This is a recipe for disaster.

The answer to this predicament is not "come home, America." That is because American security, freedom, and prosperity are connected to the world beyond our borders, and there are real and profound threats to those core interests. But those threats are not all the same in scale, urgency, and significance, nor must we act alone to address all of them. Indeed, if we try to act alone too much and do not

prioritize among those threats, we risk not only overextension but, because we will be too weak in the decisive places, catastrophic defeat.

Accordingly, I believe we must be realistic and prioritize in line with the President's America First and peace through strength approach. This is common sense: Rebuild our own defense industrial base, restore our military's readiness, induce and enable our allies and partners to do their part. Together this offers a strong long-term solution. The problem is that our threats are, in defense planning terms, in the here and now.

How should we deal with this painful quandary?

I believe there is a consensus on the broad outlines of the Nation's defense strategy. My understanding is that the Department has, across both the first Trump and Biden terms, largely settled on a defense strategy prioritizing the challenge posed by China while inducing greater allied participation to help address military shortfalls both vis-&-vis China in the Asia-Pacific as well as in other theaters against other potential opponents, particularly Russia, Iran, North Korea, and terrorists. There is also agreement on the broad outlines of the need to restore our defense industrial base and that of our allies. Finally, there is broad agreement that we need to better secure our homeland and our Nation's territorial integrity.

If confirmed as USD(P), my primary focus would be on putting that strategy into effect, precisely because that strategic consensus has remained largely theoretical rather than a reality. Indeed, the Trump Administration is entering office with the country facing a major "Lippmann Gap": a perilous mismatch between what we have been trying to achieve in the world, on the one hand, and the resources and political will we have to match those aspirations on the other.

Allowing this to go on is a recipe for disaster because, as this Committee has so ably laid out, we and our allies face the potential for multi-front conflict in the coming years, yet we are not as prepared as we should be for such an eventuality. Admiral Paparo recently emphasized that China's preparations for war are becoming disturbingly realistic, and that is only a piece of China's broader preparations for conflict. War with China is certainly not inevitable, but it is very possible, and it would be disastrous for U.S. interests—with the only thing worse than it happening being our losing such a war. At the same time, Russia's military is, as General Cavoli and others have indicated, battle-hardened and larger than where it stood in 2022. Iran poses a grave threat to our key ally Israel and our interests in the Middle East. North Korea is advancing on its nuclear and missile programs. And we must not neglect the ever-present threat of terrorism. Even worse, these potential opponents are increasingly collaborating.

Yet this takes place in a situation in which the previous Administration has made clear that the United States does not have the ability to fight multiple major wars at the same time. This is a simple fact and one with which we are now forced to reckon.

To reinforce my earlier point, the answer to this quandary in my view is not withdrawal or isolationism. To the contrary. Rather, the answer is the realistic, peace through strength, America First agenda that President Trump and his team, including Secretary Hegseth, have laid out. To my understanding, this involves:

- Rebuilding our military's readiness and capabilities;
- Restoring our defense industrial base;
- Encouraging and where necessary pressing our allies to step up to take more responsibility for their own defense; and
- Engaging with our potential adversaries to avoid unnecessary conflict, exploit wedges where possible, and enable a peace through strength outcome.

The problem is that some of these measures will take—at best—many years to pan out, while the threat we face is here and now. As a result, scarcity will persist in key regards with respect to U.S. forces and supporting industry. For this reason, it is a strategic deduction that the United States must prioritize, based on the urgency of the threats we face and the importance of the interests at stake. It is widely agreed that China is the most formidable challenger to the United States. At the same time, the previous Secretary of the Air Force said last fall not only that China was preparing for war, but that he judged the People's Liberation Army would say it is ready by 2027. As Secretary Rubio clearly and rightly stated in his confirmation hearing, there is a real chance of a Chinese attack on Taiwan in the coming years. This is the glaring reality we must face—even as we must also urgently strengthen our Nation's homeland defenses, not just against China and other State threats, but against illegal migration, narcotics flows, and other persistent threats to the very heart of our Nation.

To return to the question, then, the major strategic challenges I would face, if confirmed, would be:

- How to address and prioritize the China threat in the near term given that the joint force and the defense industrial base are not as ready as we would like, nor are our allies' forces or industries;
- How to do this while robustly strengthening U.S. homeland defenses and dealing effectively with persistent threats in other important theaters like the Middle East and Europe, including by working with our allies there to take a more leading role in their own security; and
- How to revamp the defense industrial base to attain much better results for our and our allies' forces.

In summary, I believe this is actually the best—indeed the only—way for us to sustain the international approach our country has pursued in various forms since the Second World War. We must, in my view, dispense with the heady “end of history” ambitions of the post-1989 era and return to the hard-nosed, realistic, and strategic approach we pursued during the cold war. I believe this approach, fully in line with President Trump’s common sense vision, offers a way through this very dangerous era.

Senator King, Senator Warren beat you here, so she gets to go first. Senator Warren.

Senator WARREN. No, Senator King.

Chairman WICKER. Okay. Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you. Mr. Colby, the Vice President characterized you as a truth teller, someone who would tell the truth to power, and yet, today, you have not told truth of who started the war in Ukraine. I will give you one more chance. Who started the war in Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, I would tell the truth. I don’t think I am saying anything that is untrue, but I also think it is important to be discreet and say things at the appropriate time and place. I certainly can—

Senator KING. The problem is, you tell us you are going to tell truth to power. The most obvious truth is that Russia invaded Ukraine. Everybody in the world knows that, and you won’t say it here today because it appears that you don’t want to offend the President. But that is the whole point of the Vice President’s testimony, that you would say truth to power, but you won’t do it here today on the record. This is an obvious truth. It reminds me of the old country song, who you are going to believe, me or your own lying eyes?

Mr. COLBY. Well—

Senator KING. We all saw it.

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, the way I see it, sir, is that diplomacy, especially a very delicate period where I am personally hoping that things very much, get back on track and head toward peace—

Senator KING. But shouldn’t diplomacy be based on the truth? Well, you have made your nonpoint, I suppose.

Let’s talk about terrorism. Deterrence doesn’t work with terrorism. That is one of the problems, and I am afraid this country has taken its eye off of terrorism. You talk about China, others have talked about the Middle East, but terrorism is a consistent threat. ISIS-K [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-Khorasan] is trying to make a comeback in Syria. The al Qaeda is active in Afghanistan and other places. But deterrence doesn’t work. They don’t have a capital city to blow up. They don’t care about dying. Intelligence is our best defense against terrorism, and yet we are seeing the greatest loss of jobs, of firings in the CIA in something like 50 years. Talk to me about how do we deal with the threat of terrorism when we are cutting our intelligence capacity?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, I very much agree with you about the enduring threat of terrorism. In fact, when I wrote my book, I did the defense strategy with others back in 2017, 2018. This is something I was very much thinking of. In fact, a little personal, I mean, I was walking with my two sons, who obviously don't remember this, but on the last 9/11 and conveying to them how vividly I remember that. So that is not something that I take for granted, and we do have transnational jihadi terrorism.

So I think this absolutely does—and my argument would be—and if confirmed, I would ensure, to the extent it was in my power, that preventing terrorist attacks against Americans and our allies, where possible, should be an enduring role of the American military. Obviously, that is a critical part of intelligence as well.

Senator KING. But as I have thought about this for many years, intelligence is really the best defense. Deterrence doesn't work, as I said, and yet we are eviscerating our intelligence capability as we are sitting here today.

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, I couldn't speak intelligently. I am just reading the news reports about what exactly is going on in terms of at the CIA and others, but I have confidence that Director Ratcliffe and others are making things more efficient, more focused, more lethal. I know they are trying to make—in fact, as far as I understand, try to encourage case officers and others to go into more dangerous assignments precisely to prevent such an outcome.

Senator KING. I hope you are right. Just a note on Taiwan, to me, one of the critical questions is, how much is Taiwan committed to its own defense? It is disturbing to me that in recent months the Parliament of Taiwan has moved to cut their defense budget. How are we to be expected to think about sending Americans into harm's way on behalf of an entity that doesn't seem all that interested in protecting itself? Are you disturbed by that move in the Taiwanese Parliament?

Mr. COLBY. I am profoundly disturbed, Senator, and I think the question that you are raising is one that I have heard not only Democrats but Republicans raise, often in private. Secretary Mattis, who was mentioned earlier, said, we can't care more about your defense than you can. So this is where I think—I have been trying in my communication and my recommendations for policy vis-à-vis Taiwan to try to induce them in whatever way possible to become, say, more like South Korea. So it is a very plausible model with a much more serious military because not only do I not think it is fair to Americans to ask Americans and our servicemen and women to suffer if our allies are not pulling their weight, but also that it won't even be viable.

Senator KING. One more truth-to-power question. Last week, the United States ceased supporting the restoration and protection of the electric grid in Ukraine, which the Russians have continuously targeted. Yesterday, the Administration announced its cutoff of military aid to Ukraine. Do you believe that those two things together, undermining the security of Ukraine in this critical moment, are good ideas?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, as I said, I think the critical thing at this point is for advance in the peace process, and for us, including Kyiv, to cooperate. I think there is an opportunity—

Senator KING. You are all about policy. I am asking, do you think the cutoff of aid to Ukraine yesterday is good policy?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, I am only seeing the reports recently, but I think we need to get—I think the President has a plan for us to end this war and a sustainable model for a secure and sovereign Ukraine and a Europe that can be more defensible, and I think that is the route that we should all take.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much.

Senator Sullivan, you are next.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Colby, good to see you and your family. Thank you to your family for serving. I know your father has served his country very admirably as well, so thank you, all of you.

I want to just make a point. Four years ago, when the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy was testifying at his confirmation hearing, President Biden's Under Secretary, he said that one of his top priorities was to, quote, "stamp out systemic racism within the ranks," unquote. My view is that began the woke assault on the military. Do you believe our military is systemically racist, Mr. Colby?

Mr. COLBY. I do not, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. Will you work with this Committee and Secretary Hegseth to stamp out the remaining remnants of the woke assault that we spent 4 years dealing with under Biden and his Under Secretary of Policy and everybody else?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, I commit to you to work and support Secretary Hegseth, if confirmed, to restore a focus on lethality, readiness, and meritocracy, and these kinds of values that—

Senator SULLIVAN. Good. I think—

Mr. COLBY.—you advocate.

Senator SULLIVAN.—that is the right focus, and our military is not systemically racist, despite what the last Administration told everybody.

Alliances, I am glad to see in your short, brief, but powerful opening statement you talked about the power of alliances. Do you agree that our alliances throughout the world are a source of American power and strength?

Mr. COLBY. I do, Senator. I think they need to be, as I said, adapted and made more sustainable, and that is the approach that I would take, fixing rather than dumping is my approach.

Senator SULLIVAN. The Ambassador for NATO is having his confirmation hearing right now as we speak downstairs and upstairs or somewhere in the Foreign Relations Committee. That is Matt Whitaker. He has testified already this morning. He is a strong supporter of the NATO alliance. Are you a strong supporter of the NATO alliance and getting them to get to 2 percent or 3 percent certainly, but you still think that is a useful, important alliance for the United States?

Mr. COLBY. I do. Again, Senator, I very much believe in NATO, but I believe it has to—I think the phrase is it has to adapt to—things must change to stay the same, basically, the logic being, they have got to be able to—it has got to actually go back, in my view, to something closer to what it was in the cold war. I like to

point out the West German military in 1988, 2/3 the size of current Germany, had 12 active divisions. The Germans—

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes.

Mr. COLBY.—can't put a single division together now. It is not tenable, and so I think we are seeing progress. Now the question is how do we manage this dangerous period of transition?

Senator SULLIVAN. I agree with all that, but it is worth reforming because it does provide power—

Mr. COLBY. Yes.

Senator SULLIVAN.—and strength to United States.

Mr. COLBY. Yes, I think the NATO alliance is important and have a great interest—

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me reinforce Senator Cotton's important line of questions this morning, and I appreciate those. Just to be clear, your suggestions in previous writings, you had a Wall Street Journal editorial that was highlighting those today that we could tolerate Iran with a nuclear weapon, a suggestion, is no longer your view, correct?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, if I could elaborate on this—

Senator SULLIVAN. I would just be real quick on this.

Mr. COLBY. Yes, but I believe we should not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon. If confirmed, I would believe that it is my responsibility to provide credible, good military—

Senator SULLIVAN. That is your personal view because a lot of times you can say, well, the President—

Mr. COLBY. That is my view.

Senator SULLIVAN.—said it—

Mr. COLBY. That is my own view.

Senator SULLIVAN.—so that is kind of my—

Mr. COLBY. But—

Senator SULLIVAN.—but you don't really believe it, but you—

Mr. COLBY. If I could—

Senator SULLIVAN. But you believe that, right—

Mr. COLBY. I believe that.

Senator SULLIVAN.—personally?

Mr. COLBY. Yes, and, Senator, if I could—

Senator SULLIVAN. It is important, by the way, that it is your personal—

Mr. COLBY. I agree.

Senator SULLIVAN.—view.

Mr. COLBY. No, I—and what I was saying—first of all, I have been in the policy debate a long time. Not everything I said I would say. The—

Senator SULLIVAN. I get that. You are a public intellectual. You can't be held to—

Mr. COLBY. But not anymore. Obviously, I am up for a public job of great public responsibility, so I understand that. But also, I would say a lot of what I was arguing against at the time of these conversations 15 years ago, a lot of the opponents I felt had a casual or in some cases even flippant attitude toward the employment of military force—

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes.

Mr. COLBY.—and that is a lot of what I was arguing against. Was my wording always appropriate? Was my precise framing always appropriate? No, but I think the throughput—

Senator SULLIVAN. But Iran with a nuclear weapon is—

Mr. COLBY. Is not—

Senator SULLIVAN.—is an existential threat—

Mr. COLBY. Yes.

Senator SULLIVAN.—to the United States.

Mr. COLBY. I think that we now have the leadership, with the Vice President, Secretary of Defense, and ultimately, the President, who understand that we need to be militarily strong, but also understand the downside risks of the employment and military force needs to be rational.

Senator SULLIVAN. Do you fully support the President's return to maximum pressure?

Mr. COLBY. I do, Senator, yes.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me talk on—real quick. I only got 40 seconds left. Your 2018 National Security Strategy I thought was excellent. Well done. The rebalance to focus on great power competition, very important, but also there is an element of deterrence in that that is still important. You have written in your excellent book, Strategy of Denial, that we need to provide a credible deterrent in the Taiwan Strait to prevent China from achieving regional hegemony.

But on deterrence itself, here is my question, is deterrence divisible for the United States? What I mean by that is when people say, well, we can let bad guys, Putin, roll in Europe, Iran roll in the Middle East, but we are going to be strong in the Taiwan Strait. Is deterrence divisible in that way? I think it is not. Just look at Joe Biden, Afghanistan, holy cow, that was a disaster. Guess what happened? I predicted this. Every bad guy in the world was like, hey, I am making my move. Putin probably would not have even invaded Ukraine had it not been for Afghanistan, same with Hamas and Iran with Israel. So we have got to rebalance, but is deterrence divisible? Because I think that is where you and I might have a little disagreement and get into the danger zone there.

Mr. COLBY. I think—

Senator SULLIVAN. Because I don't think it is, but what do you think?

Mr. COLBY. I think, Senator, that things are definitely interconnected. But what I will say—and I recognize I am over time—is that it is really important—I can't remember who said it, but you have got to have this right stuff in the right place at the right time, and we need to make sure that we have got that. So we have got to do both of these things. We have to pay attention to the political credibility issues and how we are perceived. But at the end of the day, as you know well, given your distinguished military service, Senator, we need to have the right stuff in the right place at the right time to have the right effect. As I think Douglas MacArthur famously said, the two most infamous words in military history are “too late,” right? I think that that side of the equation is what I am driving toward, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you—

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER.—very much, Mr. Colby. Now, a vote has begun. This hearing will continue, and members, if they will, may just run to vote and then come back. The Ranking Member has gone to vote now.

Senator Kelly, you are recognized.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Colby, great seeing you and your family here.

In introducing you, Vice President Vance said the following, and this is a quote. “You need good people in government. You need people who are going to tell the truth, who are going to look you in the eye, who are going to disagree, sometimes amicably, but actually be willing to look you in the eye and have an important conversation, who you can trust to tell you what they actually think, agree or disagree, and that is the kind of person that Bridge is.”

On his larger point, I agree strongly. In any business or organization or team, you need people willing to speak their mind. It is especially important in this role, where you would be setting the policy of the Department of Defense at a very dangerous time. So I have got a couple simple questions for you. Are there Russian troops fighting in Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. Yes, Senator.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. I really appreciate your being straightforward. Is it easier or harder for the United States to shift its focus more toward the Pacific if Putin is successful in Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. Well, I think it is certainly a critical factor. I mean, there are other factors that we talked about, but I think it would be better if there is a peace and a secure and sovereign Ukraine and a NATO that is more capable of defending itself. That would make things easier, for sure, Senator.

Senator KELLY. If Putin is perceived as being successful, and if he comes out of this feeling that this worked out in his favor, do you think that puts other European countries at risk?

Mr. COLBY. Well, I think it is clear that European countries need to take more responsibility for their own security, and I think that is already happening, and we actually want to encourage that. I mean, this is, again, where I have a somewhat different view than Senator Hirono. I think the dynamics that are going on where European leaders are now saying, hey, we are going to actually do a lot more, that is actually something that we should encourage and enable. I would say a new approach that I would advocate for and that I have been advocating for, if confirmed, would be to enable work with Europeans and work with the positive trajectory that they are on now to give them more capability to do so.

Senator KELLY. That is one side of the risk calculation. That is just one side. The other side is Putin and how he feels. My concern is if we set the conditions here where he feels a year, 3, 5 years from now that this was worthwhile for him, he gained territory, maybe Ukraine is not a member of NATO, that that puts our European allies at risk, regardless of the steps that they take now. I have spoken to leadership in Baltic nations, in Poland, in Finland, and this is a concern of theirs as well.

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, what I would say, and I think consistent with what the President, Secretary of State, and others have said, is that we should, you know, really emphasis on the verify. It can trust, but definitely verify. I don't think we should take anything for granted. I think the Europeans and our own military reforms going forward should make sure that President Putin or whoever's in charge in the Kremlin doesn't see it as advantageous to test the boundaries of our security perimeter.

Senator KELLY. Do you view Putin as a war criminal?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, that is the kind of thing that I just don't want to—I don't think it is appropriate for me, and, as I said, these words are very important as the President—I don't think I am the right person to be commenting on this one way or the other. There are factual matters, obviously, I can comment on that are not—but I think at this point, my, honestly, personal interest is in making sure that I don't do anything that would disrupt the resumption of a move toward peace—

Senator KELLY. Yes.

Mr. COLBY.—that I think would benefit Ukraine.

Senator KELLY. Do you believe there were war crimes committed in Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, again, I mean, others from—you know, certainly, I don't think it is appropriate for me to be commenting on these more delicate issues.

Senator KELLY. Can you explain how negotiations are harmed if we State something that is self-evident? How does that harm negotiations?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, I think in all negotiations, there is often time and place you can have something in a private conversation that is much different. I think we should be clear-eyed and understanding about what is going on and be frank with the Russians and others. But I think having that in public is a very different—I mean, for instance, the One China policy, I think we have touched on it. There are certain things that we understand that are delicate—

Senator KELLY. You mentioned in public, so—

Mr. COLBY. Yes.

Senator KELLY.—you don't think it is a good idea to negotiate things in public?

Mr. COLBY. I generally think that these things should be, you know, conducted behind closed doors in the appropriate forum. Sometimes it might be in public, but I think that is not something that I am driving the train on, nor would I—I am being considered for a job then—

Senator KELLY. I agree with you. I don't think we should negotiate in public. That did not happen last week.

Mr. COLBY. Well, my understanding is that was that the President and the Vice President's point was that, exactly that, so—

Senator KELLY. Well, on another subject here, where at DOD—DOD is focused on providing—and I know I am out of time, Mr. Chairman, but we talked about asymmetric advantage in my office in the INDOPACOM AOR [United States Indo-Pacific Command Area of Responsibility]. It is important we maintain, in my view, an asymmetric advantage. I hope you take a very close look at

NGAD [Next Generation Air Dominance] as we move forward, assuming you are confirmed for this role.

Mr. COLBY. Thank you, Senator. I would welcome that. I would certainly commit to taking a closer look at that.

Senator KELLY. Thank you.

Senator COTTON.

[Presiding.] Welcome back and recognize the fast-recovering and apparently hard-headed Senator Cramer.

Senator CRAMER. I haven't recovered fully, but thank you. Thank you, Mr. Colby, for being here. To your family, congratulations. Thank you for stepping in the gap again.

By the way, just to prove that I get along well with my Democratic friends, I agree with Senator Kelly and his point about NGAD. I think it needs to be a high priority. Air dominance needs to be a high priority for our Air Force.

However, I also sense and understand your frustration, although I must say you have done marvelously in answering their attempts to get you to say something that may upset the delicate balance right now going on between the various players in this hopefully—hopefully—negotiation to peace in Ukraine.

You are so much younger than me, but at least you are a student of history. Ronald Reagan was the first President I was able to vote for, and I believe he referred to communism in very negative terms, and in fact, called the Soviet Union an evil empire. I also sort of recall that he once referred to Mikhail Gorbachev as his friend. It must be easier to negotiate with a friend than it is with an evil empire, just a point I am trying to make, historically. Granted, not every situation is the same. These are not identical. The human beings in this matter are not the same, but I think the process is similar, and so I applaud your diplomacy in this room today.

Speaking of age, literally the year I was born, the first intercontinental ballistic missile was invented, and 2 years later, the first one was installed at Minot, North Dakota, the Minuteman I. The Minuteman III came along after some time, and, of course, we also have 70-year-old B-52 bombers. Both of those vehicles, of course, carry nuclear warheads, and Minot Air Force Base contains and protects the large majority of nuclear material in our arsenal.

So I have literally watched nuclear deterrence work up close and personal and have very much appreciated in my career in Congress, in the U.S. Senate, getting to know not just the processes, not just the systems, the very old systems every bit as old as I am, but also the airmen that protect them, that fly them, that operate them, really rather remarkable.

I want to drill down with that a little bit with what you were visiting with, of course, Senator Fischer about and maybe even get even more specific in the sense that particularly the land-based deterrent, the Sentinel, has had some challenges. We don't do this very often, obviously, like every 60 or 70 years, and so we find ourselves in a crunch financially with regard to Sentinel. Will you commit—I mean, just commit today that you will advise the President and Congress, but especially the President, that we really do need to have that deterrence that has worked so well, so well for so long that not a single ICBM with a nuclear warhead has had to be fired.

Mr. COLBY. Yes, Senator. Thanks very much, and I do commit to advising the support for the ICBM and the triad and the land-based leg and the Sentinel program as well. Obviously, there are concerns about the health of program, so, if confirmed, that would be a priority, working alongside A&S [Air and Space] and other—Secretary of the Air Force to try to get that thing back on track, but certainly, you have my commitment.

Senator CRAMER. As long as we are on the issue of the Air Force, many Administrations, recent Administrations, have been shedding, it seems, the responsibility of the Air Force to provide good ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance], airborne ISR. Lately, of course, the advent of Space Force, which I strongly support, has provided another layer of ISR. However, airborne ISR remains, in my view, very important. COCOMs tell us all the time how important it is, and yet we are seeing what I believe is an escalation of shedding ISR by the United States Air Force, particularly modern ISR. I would just ask what your level of commitment is to provide—and first of all, how important you feel airborne ISR is to the Air Force and to the COCOMs and your level of commitment is overseen.

Mr. COLBY. Well, thanks, Senator. Thanks very much. As we discussed in your office, Senator, I think that airborne ISR is very important, especially, you know, for its own reasons, but also because we cannot solely rely on the space-based layer.

I would also just say, Senator, if I could—and it is really nice to see you, and I hope your recovery goes very well; thank you for being here today—is, I believe, President Reagan, when he went to Moscow and he was asked about the evil empire during the period when he was engaging with President Gorbachev, and he kind of demurred. You know, he said something like, well, I wouldn't put it that way at this time. So I think that shows, actually, President Reagan is a great example of having a clear moral vision, but also understanding that there is a place and time for everything and being able to move and adapt to take advantage of new circumstances.

Senator COTTON. Senator Peters.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Senator Cotton.

Mr. Colby, good to see you, and congratulations on your nomination. It was good spending time with you in my office discussing a variety of issues. One of the things we talked about was how Detroit is a major contributor to the Allied war effort now, but famously back in World War II, producing tanks, antiaircraft guns, and other weapons, nicknamed the "Arsenal of Democracy" by President Franklin Roosevelt. I think you described it as the "Detroit deterrent," so I liked that saying.

Your previous work on the National Defense Strategy emphasized shipbuilding dominance, and you stated improving the industrial base was going to be one of your top priorities, if confirmed. We both share the same goal, to expand the industrial base, not just in Michigan, but around the country, although my focus, of course, is in Michigan. So my question for you, sir is, if confirmed, what policies or initiatives would you lead to mobilize the national military industrial base? We have to outproduce our adversaries,

and this is going to be critical. But how would you prioritize that and specifically how?

Mr. COLBY. Well, thank you very much, Senator, and I really appreciated our discussion as well, so appreciate the kind words. I absolutely share your conviction on this in an attempt to move it forward. Obviously, a lot of the responsibility for these issues would be in places like the service secretaries and acquisition and sustainment and so forth.

I would see my role—and I would really welcome hearing more from you and your staff, Senator, on this topic—is really driving at a national level from the Department on down. Obviously, if you look at the statutory responsibilities of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, it is things like the National Defense Strategy, which should be the primary guidance for the Department, as well as dealing with the interagency. I think that is a very important platform and basis to engage both within and outside the Department to drive what I would think of as really a national mobilization of our defense industrial base as part of a broader reindustrialization effort because it is not going to work if it is just the defense industrial base and try to restore some of that Detroit deterrent.

Senator PETERS. Great. Wonderful. Mr. Colby, there are proposals for a space-based Iron Dome for America, and that has gained certainly traction in some political circles, despite what are known technical challenges, certainly cost concerns as well. As you know, NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM both face some real operational challenges now, including domain awareness gaps, critical infrastructure protection, and a whole host of challenges. So my question for you is, how do you evaluate the feasibility of such an Iron Dome concept for defending the entire U.S. Homeland, given the competing operational challenges that both NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM currently face?

Mr. COLBY. Well, thanks, Senator. I understand where you are coming from. I believe and having spent a lot of time studying the history of kind of missile defense capabilities, I think those are very valid questions. I fully support the President's EO [Executive Order] and the Golden Dome approach in large part because I think the range and scale and type and sophistication of missile and other unmanned threats to the Homeland is growing, and so we need to keep pace with that.

One of the reasons, again, we are sort of—you know, the Keynes line “facts change,” so, you know, my recommendations change—is I think some of the technology breakthroughs that we have seen in things like drones and unmanned systems, as well as in artificial intelligence (AI) and related fields could really drive down the cost curve and offer up technology capabilities, or technology solutions and results that would give us a much better bang for our buck if you will. Now, a lot of that would be in places like R&E [research and engineering] and other places. But I think that is a very reasonable basis to move forward and not just kind of pie-in-the-sky thinking.

Senator PETERS. As you know, the Air Force has requested billions of dollars to research and build a collaborative combat aircraft (CCA), which, as you know, are the unmanned powered aircraft controlled by very advanced AI systems that can complete missions

on their own or be deployed in combination with human-piloted fighters. These autonomous aircraft are probably particularly crucial when we think about the Indo-Pacific and the vast range that that encompasses. My question for you is, if confirmed, how do you see CCAs being utilized and integrated into INDOPACOM? Is that the place where they would have probably the most use?

Mr. COLBY. Well, thanks, Senator. I mean, unfortunately, my knowledge of this is really from reading the defense press and on the outside, so I don't feel I have the basis to give you a really informed answer. But I would say that I think we do need to see unmanned systems operating alongside manned systems in an integrated fashion with other unmanned systems as part of the operational concepts for the future, especially in places like the Pacific, given not only the long ranges but the scale and density and sophistication of Chinese integrated air defenses.

Senator PETERS. Great. Thank you.

Mr. COLBY. Thanks, Senator.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very, very much. Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT. Sure. Mr. Colby, congratulations first on your nomination and thanks for being here. Thank you for taking the opportunity to meet with me. You know, you made a commitment when we met that you are going to do everything you can to enact President Trump's agenda, standing with our allies, including Israel, and bringing peace back through strength. So as we talked about—and I represent Florida. I have got a big Jewish population, very pro-Israel population in my State. After 4 years of President Biden's complete abandonment of Israel and appeasement of dangerous regimes in Iran, China, and more, I thank God we have President Trump back in the White House, the most pro-Israel President in our Nation's history. President Trump has already made clear that, as long as he is President, Iran will never be allowed to have a nuclear weapon. I have been encouraged by the decisive actions he has taken so far to restore maximum pressure on Iran.

I have heard concerns, as you know, from my constituents, so can you talk about your previous comments on Iran and your commitment to supporting Israel and supporting the President's agenda?

Mr. COLBY. Sure. Thank you very much, Senator. As you said, I am honored to be nominated by President Trump. I would be honored to serve in his Administration, if confirmed. I believe he has the right "America first, peace through strength" perspective. He is an excellent negotiator, and I think he is putting together a great team, and if confirmed, I would be honored to serve among them.

I believe I have a very strong record, more than strong, airtight record on support for Israel, which I have referred to as a model ally. I think it is a key interest of the United States, and its security has obviously taken a huge body blow as a result of the Hamas attacks and the concurrent attacks or subsequent attacks from Iran and its proxies and so forth. I have publicly stood with Israel. I believe it is important to have the memorandum of understanding and so forth that we stand behind Israel, not only politically, but financially and, you know, wherever possible and as part of our overall strategy, militarily and so forth.

On the issue of Iran, I have made clear that my position—personal position, as Senator Sullivan rightly underlines—is that Iran should not have a nuclear weapon. We should deny Iran to have a nuclear weapon, and that if confirmed, it would be my personal responsibility, which in my duty to present the President with very good, plausible options that are credible options that are consistent—and I should stress with the President’s overall approach, of course, which is to try to have a trust-but-verify negotiated agreement or something like it. But you have got to have the hammer there available.

What I would say, Senator—and I was discussing with Senator Sullivan a little bit—is the way that I would look at the overall kind of arc of my thinking, if you will permit me, is to say really the thrust of my thinking and advocacy over the years and my strategic approach has been we have got to get the ends, ways, and means together. We got to have something close to—I think what President Trump was talking about, very similar, we were talking about President Reagan, to the Weinberger Doctrine. You need to be strong to get peace, but if we are going to put American forces into action, we are going to have a clear goal. It is going to have an exit strategy that is plausible. That doesn’t mean inaction, but that is the kind of thing.

A lot of my advocacy and commentary, especially as a kind of public intellectual if you will, was pushing back against a lot of people who, frankly, I would say, were quite cavalier about the employment of military force. I think, to your point, Senator, with President Trump’s leadership, with the Vice President, with Secretary of Defense Hegseth, we have a team that understands strength for sure, that understands the role of negotiation, but also understands that it is important—the downside risks of the use of military force and the importance of not being cavalier about employing our men and women in uniform.

Senator Rick Scott: Thank you.

Mr. COLBY. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Rick Scott: The prior Administration withheld and slowed down the delivery of bombs to Israel and the joint direct attack munition kits to convert those bombs into precision-guided munitions. In this role, I think, would you just go on and commit that you agree that we should reverse the former Administration’s anti-Israel policies and correct any bureaucratic holdups that are delaying any United States arms to Israel?

Mr. COLBY. I agree, Senator, and what I have said, and what I would say here again, is, if confirmed, I would advocate removing kind of the bear hug, which is to say Israel is a model ally in the sense that it is a capable and willing ally that isn’t asking us to fight all its own fights. It basically wants the ability and capability and backing to go out and take care of business.

I think a very effective example of that ends/ways/means model is exactly Israel’s actions against Hezbollah and Iran itself a few months ago, which I think were very, very effective, and they left us in a better position. Obviously, they didn’t solve the problem of Hezbollah in Iran. I think the Israelis are realists like we should be, which is to say, the threat doesn’t just go away, but they put

themselves and us in a better position by the intelligent and robust application of military force in a politically smart way.

Senator Rick Scott: The last one is a real easy question. Do you agree that the government of China has made the decision to become our adversary?

Mr. COLBY. Yes, absolutely. I think that is correct, Senator.

Senator Rick Scott: Thanks.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Scott. Mr. Colby, in the context of your answer, what is the bear hug?

Mr. COLBY. My understanding of the bear hug, from what I have been reading, is like a hovering kind of control over Israel's decisions that some people advocate, which is saying, you know, we are going to pick and choose exactly what you can and can't do.

My view that I think is consistent with the President's view, if I may say, Senator, is that we should be looking for allies who are able, but also willing to do things more autonomously and take action. I think, in the case of, for instance, Hezbollah, again, just relying on public reporting, I am not sure how much, you know, we in the United States even really knew about it, but it was very effective, and I think it ended up being more in our interests.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you for that explanation.

Senator Warren.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations on your nomination, Mr. Colby.

So United States does not target innocent civilians, and not only because that is what is right, it is also that is what is effective. General Stanley McChrystal coined the term "insurgent math"—you may remember hearing about this—meaning that for every civilian you kill, you create 10 new enemies. U.S. Air strikes killed as many as 48,000 civilians between 2001 and 2021. You can do the math on that.

Now, most people know that killing civilians is wrong and should be rare, and when it has happened, our troops file reports. But too often, those reports don't actually receive a response from anyone, and we don't learn how to avoid future accidents that result in civilian deaths. That is why Congress passed several reforms into law to reduce civilian harm and to improve our guidance for our servicemembers, including establishing the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence. This center helps make military operations more effective, and it also supports troops in preventing and responding to civilian harm.

So let me ask you, Mr. Colby, if confirmed, will you oversee implementation of these reforms? Do you agree that preventing civilian deaths enhances U.S. national security, including reducing risks to our own troops?

Mr. COLBY. I do agree with that, Senator.

Senator WARREN. Good. I am glad to hear that. It is very important.

This isn't a partisan issue. During the first Trump administration, the Pentagon grew concerned about the number of civilian deaths resulting from operations that were in place to try to defeat ISIS, and it launched a study. Secretaries of Defense Mattis and Esper and Austin all took steps to reduce civilian harm across the Administrations. Today, the Center of Excellence helps com-

manders sharpen their campaign plans so they can make smarter decisions about strikes that they need to deploy.

So, Mr. Colby, do you agree that commanders can make better decisions in the field when they are equipped with training on how to avoid civilian casualties?

Mr. COLBY. I do, Senator.

Senator WARREN. Good. I am glad to hear that.

Following the laws of war helps set us apart from terrorists and from adversaries like Russia, which has targeted civilians in Ukraine. American troops also rely on Judge Advocate General's Corps for legal advice. Senator Graham, who himself was a JAG rightly called the JAGs the conscience of the military. Mr. Colby, do you think it is important that commanders have legal advice that they can count on and trust?

Mr. COLBY. I do, Senator.

Senator WARREN. Secretary Hegseth's outspoken disregard for the rules of war endangers U.S. troops, and his firing of the top military lawyers in the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force last month, and his plans to reduce the rank of JAG leadership from a 3-star role to a 2-star role are deeply concerning. If confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, your views will send a message from the top about whether the laws of war matter. I urge you to take this seriously. I appreciate your answers today. If you want to expand on any of them, you are welcome to do so.

Mr. COLBY. Thank you, Senator. I have seen the reports in the press, so I can't speak about it authoritatively. I trust Secretary Hegseth's judgment. What I would say is that, if confirmed, I certainly would take the laws of war very seriously. It is something I have studied in the past, I have thought about a great deal. It is part of the overall ends/ways/means and the rational use of military power. Again, not to be sanguine about it or blasé, but to say that, you know, observing the laws of war, understanding them in a reasonable way that is consistent with combat effectiveness and military effectiveness and achieving our goals and deterrence, I think that is a very important part of the picture that I think is part of the role of the USCP, if confirmed.

Senator WARREN. I appreciate that, Mr. Colby. I think that helps keep our warfighters safer, and I also think it helps keep our Nation safer. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much, Senator.

Now, we have Senator Tuberville, followed by Senator Duckworth.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Good morning, Mr. Colby, good to see you and your family, and thank you for wanting to take on this job. It is going to be very difficult, but we think you can handle it.

Mr. Colby, you advocate for a strategy of denial in military and geopolitical contexts. How does this concept translate to Central and South American places like Panama and the troubling amount of influence that China is starting to have and has had in that area? By the way, they just announced that one of our major corporations is purchasing both ports at the Panama Canal, which is very good news.

Mr. COLBY. Well, thanks very much, Senator. I think the President's early initiatives on our hemisphere in places like Panama

are very encouraging. I think this is part of an overall strategy both to secure our own interests directly, secure the territorial integrity of our homeland from unchecked migration and lethal fentanyl flows that are killing hundreds of thousands of Americans, but also, as you said, Senator, to ensure that China does not gain a foothold or beyond, a dominant position in critical areas of Latin America, which I think was happening. I think that is a big part of the strategy now.

I think part of that is up to the military, but a lot of it is part of the other agencies of government, the State Department. I know former Ambassador to Mexico, Chris Landau, Ambassador Chris Landau is going through his hearing downstairs, I believe. He is up for the Deputy Secretary of State. I think that is the kind of relationship between DOD and State Department where you have a clear picture that we have got to have a handle on our hemisphere. We are pursuing our own strategies, and we are also empowering countries in the hemisphere and in the region to contribute more through development, through better governance themselves, through alignment with the kind of commonsense approaches that I think that we are following here that can result in better outcomes for all of us.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes, I think you will find the new Administration, Panama is very receptive to us too. Once you get in your position, you will find that out. I have been down there several times, and they need help, as we need more access to the canal, so thank you for that.

You know, in 2023 President Biden overrode President Trump. The Department of Air Force and the findings of multiple studies, including an Inspector General review and directed that the headquarters of Space Command remain in Colorado instead of moving to its selective location at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, my State. Mr. Colby, if confirmed, you will be the senior DOD official in charge of space policy, as well as strategy, plans, and capabilities for the entire Department. Do you agree with me that, as a matter of policy, it is in our Nation's best interest to make basing decisions on merit and not on political agendas?

Mr. COLBY. I do, Senator.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Mr. Colby, much of your work is about prioritizing our defense policy toward deterring aggression with China or pacing challenge. What do you make of the progress made over the past few years by our adversaries toward integrating with their militaries? I am talking about since Ukraine, Russia have had their conflict, all the people in the East basically are running to China. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. COLBY. Well, I think it is really, really disturbing, Senator. I think there has been this kind of—I think of it as like a counter-coalition, China, Russia, Iran, North Korea. China is kind of the cornerstone of that coalition. It is by far the largest economy. Their support has made the Russian war effort in Ukraine sustainable. They are helping the Iranians. The Iranians are helping them. The Russians are helping the North Koreans.

So I think there is a couple of things to be done about that. On the defense side, I think it is important for us to work with our allies to kind of plug the gaps in our perimeter. A lot of that is get-

ting our forces in a better State of readiness, putting them in the right place, getting our defense industrial base back into good shape, robust defense funding, and then getting our allies to step up. I think a big part of this is we have some allies—Israel, I have mentioned—India, South Korea, Poland. They are really pulling their weight. You could add Finland up there is doing a pretty good job. But a lot of the biggest economies in our Alliance Network really aren't pulling their weight. They are starting now, so I think there is a real opportunity to capitalize on that, because together, we are much wealthier than this countercoalition, but we have got to turn that into real military capability.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Your quick thoughts on BRICS?

Mr. COLBY. I think, you know, BRICS are sort of a representation of the changing world dynamic. I think Secretary Rubio put it very well. We are no longer in Charles Krauthammer's unipolar world. We are in a world the United States is still, I think, the strongest country out there, but China's the biggest, most powerful rival we have faced in probably 150 years, and other countries are making their decisions. Obviously, Indians, who I think our relationship there is golden going forward, and we should really deepen that, and if confirmed, I would make a big priority of that. They are part of it, so it is complicated, but people are going to be moving around talking to—you know, the Saudis are talking the Russians, and they are talking to us. That is very common. That is how the world's going to be. That is the reality of the world system as it is now, I think.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much, Senator Tuberville.

Senator DUCKWORTH.

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

While I do not agree with many of your policy positions, I do recognize that you are one of the most experienced and knowledgeable nominees from this Administration to come before this Committee, and I appreciated our conversation in my office very much. It is clear to me that, unlike most Trump national security nominees, you actually have been putting in the work to become an expert in your field.

That said, expertise alone is not enough. Integrity, adherence to the rule of law, and unwavering commitment to uphold our democratic institutions are just as essential. So as I do with every Trump administration candidate to come before this Committee, I must ask, Mr. Colby, if President Trump or Secretary Hegseth asked you to do something illegal, unethical, or in direct violation of your oath to defend the Constitution, would you refuse to obey?

Mr. COLBY. Well, thank you very much, Senator, for the kind words. I would say I contest the premise of the question. I don't think the President or the Secretary would ask such a question, but I am committed, I would absolutely not follow an unconstitutional or unlawful order.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Mr. Colby—that was so easy. Why can't the others do that? Thank you for saying that.

Mr. Colby, the global threat environment is more volatile than it has been in decades. Russia's aggression, China's growing asser-

tiveness and challenges in the Indo-Pacific demand clear-eyed leadership and a commitment to our alliances. Yet rather than reaffirming America's leadership, this Administration has actively undermined our allies, cast doubt on our commitments to NATO, and, most disturbingly, cozied up to the authoritarian adversaries like Russia. The credibility of the United States as a reliable partner has been called into question by our very own actions. Our President has refused to acknowledge the reality that Russia's unprovoked war of aggression in Ukraine has shattered global security norms, and our recent gesture of support toward Russia are emboldening our adversaries.

Mr. Colby, can you tell me if Russia invaded Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, as I said earlier, I don't want to disrupt anything going on with commentary on a fraught matter at a very delicate time. I am really committed to making sure whatever I can do to—or not do anything that would hinder the ability to get a peace process on track.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Why does acknowledging whether or not Russia invaded Ukraine, which is a known fact, affect the peace process?

Mr. COLBY. I think the President and the Vice President have made clear that words matter in these times of delicate diplomatic negotiations, along the lines, I think, of what Senator Cramer was saying. It is not my place. I am here as a nominee. I am not part of the conversation. I wouldn't want to do anything to weigh in on this, especially at this very sensitive time where, Senator, I hope things do get back on track where we can have a move toward peace. I don't think it is my place. I am not authorized to speak on this matter, as a representative of the government. I am a nominee here.

Senator DUCKWORTH. It is astounding to me that you can't answer the question of whether or not Russia invaded Ukraine when it is a known fact. That would be as if saying you don't know whether or not Hitler invaded Poland. It is astounding to me that you cannot answer that question.

After last Friday's shameful display in the Oval Office, it is clear that Trump is in the middle of a capitulation, not a negotiation. The wholesale refusal of this Administration's officials and nominees to acknowledge the established fact of Russia's illegal and immoral full-scale invasion of Ukraine out of fealty to Trump and, ultimately, Vladimir Putin is one of the most shocking and disturbing things I have seen in my life.

Let's move on. Mr. Colby, you have been a vocal advocate for prioritizing the PRC as our greatest geopolitical challenge, and we had a very good conversation about this. I look forward to working with you on opposing our near-peer adversary, often arguing that our strategic focus should shift away from other regions, and you have said, you know, sometimes we need to shift from Europe and the Middle East and really focus on the Indo-Pacific.

Under this Administration, we have seen a surge in deployment of Active Duty United States military personnel to the southern border and Guantanamo Bay, not to counter an active military threat, but instead to perform law enforcement and accomplish logistical tasks that are typically handled by civilian agencies. Mr.

Colby, given your stated concerns about the need to strengthen deterrence against the communist Republic of China, do you believe diverting military assets to perform domestic political theater at the border is an effective use of our limited defense resources, or is it a distraction from the real threats that we face?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, I wouldn't regard it as domestic political theater to secure our border and to make sure that we have territorial integrity, but, if confirmed, I would certainly make it a real priority to make sure that those rightful efforts to ensure our territorial integrity and secure our border don't detract from our prioritizing the China threat, which is the biggest kind of external, you know, State threat that we face as a country.

Senator DUCKWORTH. It is good to hear that. Thank you, Mr. Colby.

Mr. COLBY. Thank you.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman WICKER. I think that was a very helpful answer, Mr. Colby.

Senator BUDD.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Chairman. Bridge, great to see you. Congrats on your nomination. Great to see your family here as well.

So, if confirmed, your influence on the National Defense Strategy and planning guidance will shape the Department for years to come. So in the past, I have highlighted through section 908 of the 2025 NDAA the importance of special operations forces (SOF) and the need for those strategic documents to better reflect how the unique size, structure, and posture of special operations forces enables them to both serve as a preventer of conflict and if, God forbid, there is a conflict, an enabler of it.

So how does SOF, or how does special operations forces fit into your vision for our National Defense Strategy?

Mr. COLBY. Thank you very much, Senator Budd. I do think the special operations forces play a very important role not only in the prevention of conflict—obviously, there are a lot of things that can do, building partner capacity, counterterrorism and so forth—but also, God forbid, in the event of a major power war, SOF has multiple roles. It also is a way, apropos of the discussion with Senator King, to keep an eye on, you know, the ongoing terrorism threat. So I think SOF plays a very important role in our overall military posture.

Senator BUDD. Thank you for that. So how does regular warfare fit into the strategy of denial in the context of China or other adversaries?

Mr. COLBY. Thanks, Senator. As discussed in my responses to the advanced policy questions, that is something I have some sort of broad thoughts about, about the ability to create dilemmas for China in the event of conflict or before conflict to deter it along, say, some of the secondary angles for China, as well as building partner capacity and the potential, again, God forbid, in the event of conflict, to create difficulties and dilemmas for China directly in a military sense as well. So I think those are some of the areas. That is an area I would want to dive deeper into to give you a more informed answer, if confirmed.

Senator BUDD. In Strategy of Denial—I know that has come up a lot today, and thanks again for the copy. It was one of the first meetings I had in that early basement office in the Senate when you came and saw me a few years ago. But you talk about the importance of coalitions and maintaining a regional balance of power. So if a coalition is too small, it lacks influence. If it is too big, it may lack commitment from the members. So what does an optimal coalition look like to maintain the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific in particular?

Mr. COLBY. Well, thank you very much, Senator. You are very kind. That is something, as you may recall, I discuss in my book a lot. I think we actually are in pretty good shape in terms of the formal security commitments. I mean, this is apropos of my discussion with Senator Cotton, I think, and the Chairman as well. You know, we have very strong alliances with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines. I think we have effectively a very strong security relationship with Taiwan. Of course, Australia is very strong. Then I think we have a very deepening and important relationship with India that is directly proximate. I think we also could build effectively on a partnership with Vietnam. Obviously, we have a long and kind of fraught history of Vietnam. But the Vietnamese, say what you will, they are committed to defending themselves, and they see, I think, the challenge from China.

So I think those are some of the places where we can work. I think if we can kind of hold the line at that way that, say, would be an effective model going forward. Then, of course, there are ways at the diplomatic level and political level to use mechanisms like the Quad to, you know, build on that. But from a defense point of view, I think the defense perimeter along the first island chain is the one that makes the most sense.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. So given China's coercive activities in the Indo-Pacific, do you see any states hedging, and what can we do to minimize those states' concern about the United States commitment to regional stability and security?

Mr. COLBY. Well, I think that is a really important question. I think, in a sense, you see hedging behavior all the time. You see balancing behavior by countries. You know, take Taiwan or Japan, for instance. Japan is, albeit far too slowly, increasing its defense level of effort. It needs to go a lot farther, a lot faster. But you also see some hedging behavior. You see, you know, engagement with Beijing. I think all of the countries are kind of, you know, sort of continually reevaluating.

I think the most important thing that we can do is have credible, capable military forces that are in the right place at the right time, to my discussion with Senator Sullivan, to be able to defeat a sustained and effective Chinese aggression against a country within our security perimeter.

Senator BUDD. So what are your thoughts on a NATO-like alliance in the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. COLBY. I am not theologically opposed to it, Senator, but I have been skeptical. I was in Korea earlier last year, and there is the trilateral with the United States, Japan, and Korea. I think that is encouraging in some ways, but if we look at South Korean

political dynamics over the last 6 to 8 months, it is not clear that that is going to be enduring.

I think there is a lot of spade work and political capital that is put into a multilateral organization, whereas I think something may be building up to have more multilateralization in the region, but not the huge ambition of an Asia NATO, especially because you have got Japan over here, India over here, Australia down here. Their circumstances are quite distinct.

Senator BUDD. Thank you very much, Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much, Senator Budd.

Senator ROSEN.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, for holding this hearing. Thank you, Mr. Colby, for meeting with me earlier and for your willingness to serve.

Before I begin my questions, I want to add my voice to those of my colleagues to express my deep frustration with Friday's shameful Oval Office performance, followed by the President's decision last night to halt the delivery of United States military assistance to Ukraine and their fight for their country against a brutal dictator's invasion. I cannot believe that the United States would side with dictators over democracies, over our democratic partners and allies. We must stand with Ukraine.

With that, I am going to move on to a different part of the world, Iran, because we have to combat Iranian aggression. Iran is the world's leading State sponsor of terrorism. It remains the primary source of instability in the Middle East. It endangers the world through its support of proxies and its pursuit of developing a nuclear weapon. We know Hamas would not have been able to carry out the October 7 terrorist attack in Israel without Iranian support. We know this to be true. Across the region, Iran also continues to work against American interests and poses one of the greatest threats to United States military personnel and those of our allies and partners.

So, Mr. Colby, like many of my colleagues, I worry that limiting United States military involvement in the Middle East, which you have advocated for in the past, could only allow Iran to further grow its influence in the region. What are the risks to United States national security and the security of the broader region if Iran continues, as you may have advocated in the past, to expand its reach unchecked? If we take our eye off Iran, what happens?

Mr. COLBY. Well, thanks, Senator. Just to be clear, I have always opposed Iran's hegemonic ambitions. I think, to the contrary, my view has been how can we handle this situation, again, if I could stress from the realistic predicate of where our military is now. And if you look at the 2022 National——

Senator ROSEN. Okay. So let me take you at that because, over the last year, Iran has escalated targeting United States vessels, personnel in the Gulf of Aden via the Houthis, Iran's proxies. They have targeted United States Forces in Iraq and Syria via its proxies for many years. So how are we going to address the ongoing threat?

Mr. COLBY. Well, I don't contest that Iran is a threat or a malign regime in the slightest. I fully agree with you about that. I think the intelligent application of our own capabilities in the region, but

also using and bolstering the capabilities of our allies, especially our key ally Israel, but also others in the region—I spoke with Senator Ernst about the Abraham Accords model, the ability to bolster some of the Arab states and other European partners that may have an important interest, that this can be a broader thing. And of course, Israel, to its credit, has significantly degraded Hezbollah’s capability, of course, Hamas’ capability, but also Iran’s capability directly.

So my view, Senator, just to be very clear, is not that we should ignore the Middle East or that we should totally get out of the Middle East. I am baselining off the reality that I think all of us, candidly, must baseline off of, which is that we don’t have a multi-war military. And you mentioned some of the things that the Iranians have been doing. Well, Admiral Paparo said the other day that the Chinese are, you know, now basically in the business of conducting rehearsals, not even exercises. And Frank Kendall, the Secretary of the Air Force, said a couple months ago—the Biden administration, Secretary of the Air Force—he said, not only are the Chinese on track to get ready by 2027—

Senator ROSEN. Well—

Mr. COLBY.—but the PLA [People’s Liberation Army] will say it is ready by 2027.

Senator ROSEN. Let’s talk about China because I want to learn about China’s lessons from Ukraine. China has been identified, of course, as you say, the pacing challenge for Department of Defense across both the Trump and the Biden administrations. As Ranking Member Reed has quoted former CIA Director Burns, “No one is watching United States support for Ukraine more closely than Chinese leaders,” and that abandoning Ukraine, I am going to quote again, would be one of the “surest ways to rekindle Chinese perceptions of America’s fecklessness and stoke Chinese aggressiveness.”

So, Mr. Colby, after Friday’s shameful performance in the Oval Office, what message did President Trump and Vice President Vance send to China regarding American resolve to back democracies against brutal dictators? How does taking our eye off the ball anywhere make us any less safe?

Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator Rosen, I would point out that Director Burns, who is a distinguished foreign policy professional, has also said repeatedly that China was continuing to plan to move toward the 2027 and that Xi Jinping did have the intent to ultimately resolve the issue. So, you know, Director Burns is obviously a foreign policy expert of great distinction, but if you look at what he himself has said—

Senator ROSEN. Can I ask you a quick question?

Mr. COLBY. Sure, yes.

Senator ROSEN. Do you think that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are working in concert against us to present this multilateral challenge against us so that we—

Mr. COLBY. Yes.

Senator ROSEN.—won’t fight back? So how do you justify us taking our eye—

Mr. COLBY. Senator, if we—

Senator ROSEN.—off the ball anywhere?

Mr. COLBY. It is arithmetic, with respect, Senator. We have—

Chairman WICKER. Right, first of all, your answer to that question was yes, and now you are elaborating on that answer?

Mr. COLBY. Yes, Senator.

Chairman WICKER. Again, I hear much slower than you two talk. Okay.

Mr. COLBY. My apologies. Would you like me to continue, Senator?

Chairman WICKER. Yes, if you would elaborate on your affirmative answer to that question.

Mr. COLBY. Yes, Senator, I do believe there is a countercoalition that is working active. I know the Chairman, you talked about this extensively. But again, the factual predicate that I think we all must proceed from is that, as the 2022 National Defense Strategy said, we have a one-war military and change. We don't have a military that is capable of fighting four adversaries at the same time. I would like, in theory, in principle, to have such a—but that is not the reality. I believe, especially because the threat is so acute and so realistic, and because of the very real possibility of multifront war, we must have a realistic plan.

I feel a special obligation that, if confirmed, I must deliver a strategy that actually deals with that. That is not neglecting the Iran threat. That is not neglecting the military threat that Russia poses, but it is a realistic plan to deal with that. Part of that, of course, is greater defense investment and revitalization of our defense industrial base, but it is also making intelligent use of our allies, and in particular in the case of Europe and countries like Japan and Taiwan, pressing them to take greater responsibility, which they can and must do.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much, and thank you for that elaboration which required us to take a little extra time. Mr. Colby, I think you will acknowledge that is precisely the situation that my Peace Through Strength plan attempts to address and address beginning right now.

Mr. COLBY. Senator, absolutely. I have had the pleasure of reviewing it, and I think we are keying off exactly. I am a big supporter of that kind of perspective of restoring American strength, defense industrial might, and getting our allies to do more, which it seems to me is also the perspective of the President and the Secretary of Defense.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, and Senator Schmitt.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to give you more of an opportunity to elaborate as a fellow realist. I think that there are a lot of hard truths that need to be told. The fact is, we can't be everywhere all at once all the time. That is the truth. So whether it is this Jacksonian or Jeffersonian or prioritizer or realist, whatever you want to call it, I think that this town has been in denial for a very long time about a very fundamental issue of scarcity, right? So we have to make decisions, and protecting the homeland, focusing on China, those are our top two priorities.

That isn't to say there aren't other things that are of concern, but our industrial base has been strained to a point that it has not been, which is why there is really no daylight on this Committee about sort of trying to reinvigorate that industrial base. But I think this Wilsonian adventurism that has defined post-cold war foreign

policy has been a huge distraction about what our core national interests are, and so you have been really a leading advocate on that. But I want to give you an opportunity to sort of expound on that.

In your hopefully new role here, could you elaborate on what that prioritization, how that would play out, how you think about these things? Because the truth is, if you have a strained industrial base, if you are building things for a land war in Europe, you might be neglecting long-range fires in the Indo-Pacific, right? So how do you view all this?

Mr. COLBY. Well, thanks very much, Senator, and obviously, really an honor and a very similar perspective as yours. I would say that I think—you know, and I talked about this in my responses to my advanced policy questions, this so-called Lippmann gap, named after the famous journalist Walter Lippmann, who talked about, you know, the danger of a gap between what you are aspiring to do and what you actually can do. If you get that bluff called, that is catastrophe. I feel—again, and I—forgive me for getting a little emotional about it, but I feel we are at the precipice. I think the President is exactly right, and Mr. Chairman, I think you are absolutely right that we could be at the precipice, not only of a major war, God forbid, with China itself, but by deduction of a multi-front war, and we do not have the capacity.

I don't luxuriate in that limitation. I would like to get, as you say, Senator, to a position—and we have spent a lot of time in this hearing, and I spent a lot of time saying let's do the things necessary, Mr. Chairman, as you have talked about, to get us out of this situation not only for our own forces but to supply our allies. What I have found a difficult challenge is I feel there is a kind of recognition in one part of the collective brain of the American system that this is a reality, but the behavior hasn't actually adapted yet.

What I fear is if we don't have a realistic plan, the worst could happen, and we could find ourselves in the worst possible outcome like losing a war. That is why I mentioned it in my opening statement because I think, God forbid, that is actually plausible, and I want to avoid that at all costs.

By the way, I also don't want to abandon the Middle East. I don't want a nuclear Iran. I don't want Russia to run roughshod over Europe. I don't want North Korea to take over South Korea. But if we know, as a factual, empirical matter, that we can't do all those things in even remotely concurrent timelines, don't we need to have a credible plan for how to do so? I think part of that is greater resources, Mr. Chairman, as you have advocated for and I think that, you know, in the reconciliation, hopefully, that will be part of that reindustrialization.

But also the secret sauce, I think, Senator Sullivan, as you were saying, is our allies, and they can do more, and they have done more. I mean, Japan is an incredibly wealthy economy. I mean, Taiwan, look at the investments the President got for TSMC [Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company] yesterday. These are incredibly wealthy societies. Why are they not spending at levels commensurate with the threat? I don't understand.

Senator SCHMITT. Well, and that level and the type of spending matters too, right? When our European allies talk about—

Mr. COLBY. Exactly.

Senator SCHMITT.—stepping up, it can't be for pensions.

Mr. COLBY. Right, exactly.

Senator SCHMITT. You know, and tough talk and percentages of increase for GDP don't win wars, weapons do.

Mr. COLBY. Precisely.

Senator SCHMITT. The deindustrialization that has happened in Europe—and most recently in Germany—has completely kneecapped their ability to be a serious player on this, which is concerning to me. I know it is concerning to you, right?

As it relates to the industrial base then—and we had Mr. Feinberg here last week—I think that is a really important confirmation. I think yours is as well. How do you see working together—

Mr. COLBY. Yes.

Senator SCHMITT.—with him? Because I agree, I am fully supportive of the Chairman's initiative for the plussing up and Peace through Strength, but practically speaking, then, how do we get to a place where we are more nimble? How do we get to a place?

Mr. COLBY. Yes.

Senator SCHMITT. What are your views on this as far as procurement goes? I know that is not specifically your job, but it is related. It undergirds all of this, right—

Mr. COLBY. Correct.

Senator SCHMITT.—for us to be able to do it.

Mr. COLBY. Well, thank you, Senator. I think actually the complementarity—I have spent some time with Mr. Feinberg, and I think we have a very natural complementarity. As I understand it, he has really presented himself more as kind of the COO of the Department to get better results, and I am more the policy and strategy guy. I think that is a very natural complementarity where there is obviously different expertise, different experiences, so I would really welcome working with him. Then, of course, the Secretary has his own set of extraordinary—I would not say that mine are extraordinary, but his set of extraordinary background and experiences and expertise. So I think to me, if confirmed, I would be very excited to work as part of that team that I think has a natural complementarity.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you. Thank you.

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

Senator BANKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Colby, since we have started this hearing, a lot of things have happened. I don't know if you are—you are not in a position to follow the news. It is laughable to me to hear the Democrats call the meeting in the Oval Office on Friday shameful. I know I had to step out and go to a Veterans Committee hearing. I had to go vote. But I am sure I missed a lot of the rhetoric from my Democrat colleagues about the terrible, shameful meeting in the Oval Office on Friday.

You might not be aware that 1 hour ago, President Zelensky tweeted. He called the meeting on Friday "regrettable." He said, "Ukraine wants peace, not forever wars." He thanked President Trump and America for our support, even for the Javelins that President Trump provided in the first Trump term that kept

Ukraine on its feet. But here is the kicker. President Zelensky now said 1 hour ago, he is ready to come back to America and sign the minerals deal. Is it possible here that President Trump's unconventional approach is actually very effective?

Mr. COLBY. Yes, absolutely. I think the proof is in the pudding, and I think that is a really encouraging thing to say. I am delighted to hear the news that we are making progress. Obviously, knock on wood. I also think it shows that, you know, trusting President Trump and his kind of particular deputies with this kind of high-level diplomacy is really important, and it is not for me as a nominee to be spouting off and, you know, potentially interrupting this kind of progress. It is very encouraging. I know I speak for myself, but I am pretty confident, you—I know, very confident, you too. You want peace there. You want Europe and Ukraine to be in as good a position as they possibly can be. So that is very encouraging.

Senator BANKS. It seems like a pattern, though, with President Trump.

Mr. COLBY. Yes. Yes, I think so.

Senator BANKS. It is Zelensky—

Mr. COLBY. I mean, I think he is in—

Senator BANKS.—it is Iran, it is—

Mr. COLBY. Yes.

Senator BANKS.—our other enemies abroad. It is the tariff approach. It seems like President Trump's unconventional approach is actually very effective.

Mr. COLBY. I think it is very effective, and I think there is a degree—I mean, he is a master negotiator. He is a dealmaker. He understands leverage, and he is not going to be calculable. I think one of the main critiques I think we probably all have of the last Administration was that they were highly calculable, and you could kind of measure it, and so the Russians could kind of precisely calibrate it. After almost 3 years of conflict, things were going worse. I think with President Trump, you have a very different dynamic. You don't know what he is going to do, but you can get a deal with him. This is, I think, the point about not having *ad hominem*s is an important part of this.

I don't think he misunderstands who Vladimir Putin is, to the contrary, but I think he understands as part of a deal, a good deal, a verifiable deal, a positive deal, and the same logic would go with Iran and, God willing, he is able to achieve that as well or make progress in that direction as well. That would be the same approach I think he would take.

Senator BANKS. I totally agree. I want to move on. Last year, INDOPACOM admitted to Congress that it had the most unfunded priorities in its history, \$11 billion. One of INDOPACOM's biggest shortfalls was missile defense. At the same time, we have been giving Patriot missile defense systems to Ukraine. We fired off hundreds of million-dollar missiles shooting down \$1,000 Houthi drones. How wise is it to burn through our missile defense stocks in less important parts of the world when INDOPACOM is so desperately short of those weapons?

Mr. COLBY. Well, I think—Senator, thanks—this is exactly the problem I am pointing to. That is not to say that we shouldn't be

doing anything in Europe or the Middle East, to the contrary, but it is to say if we all agree that China is the top challenge and China is the most formidable threat, we need to act like it because, especially given what Admiral Paparo and others are saying and Bill Burns has been saying, that we need to act like this could actually happen. I agree with Secretary Rubio. There is a very real threat under President Trump's—in the term that he has been elected to, given the 2027 date, that, God forbid, a war could happen. I agree that President Trump has said that China would not attack Taiwan under his watch, and if confirmed, I would make it my business, my particular business, to give him the military strength to back that up, coupled with the negotiating ability, Senator, that you just referred to.

Senator BANKS. Yes. On that note, our Navy is not as big as it needs to be. We especially don't have enough Navy ships in the Pacific to counter China's rapidly growing fleet. Despite that, President Biden decided to permanently deploy more Navy ships in Europe to counter Russia, a nation which lost most of its Black Sea fleet to a country without a navy. Mr. Colby, should we be putting more vessels in Europe when we already don't have enough in the Pacific?

Mr. COLBY. Senator, I think we should be putting the military capabilities, especially that are relevant in the priority area—ships, submarines, missile defense assets have to be focused on deterring a conflict over Taiwan, and if, God forbid, it happens, giving our soldiers and sailors and airmen and defenders and marines the best shot. I mean, that is something I feel very deeply is I am not in uniform, but if confirmed, it would be my job to make sure those who are in uniform or who do stand in harm's way the best shot at winning because the American military shouldn't get an unfair fight.

Senator BANKS. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much, and thank you, Senator Banks, for mentioning the really encouraging developments that have taken place since this hearing began. I am going to take the liberty of reading into the record the exact statement of President Zelensky today. I quote, "I would like to reiterate Ukraine's commitment to peace. None of us wants an endless war. Ukraine is ready to come to the negotiating table as soon as possible to bring lasting peace closer. Nobody wants peace more than Ukrainians. My team and I stand ready to work under President Trump's strong leadership to get a peace that lasts. We are ready to work fast to end the war, and the first stages could be the release of prisoners and truce in the sky"—could be—"ban on missiles, long-ranged drones, bombs on energy and other civilian infrastructure, and truce in the sea immediately, if Russia will do the same.

"Then we want to move very fast through all the stages and to work with the U.S. to agree on a strong final deal. We really do value how much America has done to help Ukraine maintain its sovereignty and independence, and we remember the moment when things changed when President Trump provided Ukraine with Javelins. We are grateful for this.

"Our meeting in Washington at the White House on Friday did not go the way it was supposed to be. It is regrettable that it hap-

pened this way. It is time to make things right. We would like future cooperation and communication to be constructive.

“Regarding the agreement on minerals and security, Ukraine is ready to sign it at any time in any convenient format. We see this agreement as a step toward greater security and solid security guarantees, and I truly hope it will work effectively,” end of quote.

I would then remind those within the sound of my voice and those reading the record that our President, President Trump, has said, “The Government of the United States of America supports Ukraine’s efforts to obtain security guarantees needed to establish lasting peace,” to end the quote.

So let me just say this. I probably will not have an opportunity to take to the floor today, but I hope this is a day when we can refrain from some of the rhetoric that it is tempting to make. I hope this is a day when Senators and Members of the House of Representatives can take a deep breath and hope that the excellent, hopeful signs that come from this statement by President Zelensky come to fruition and come to fruition quickly.

I have had fights with my roommates over time. We got over it. I am even told sometimes there are family fights. It is regrettable when they spill out into the front yard. But friends get over it, friends decide to move on, and I think we are seeing that process today. I hope to heaven that that is the case. Since Senator Banks mentioned it, I took the liberty of bringing it to the attention and to the record.

Now, Mr. Colby, Senator Sullivan wants to question you for another half an hour. No, Senator Sullivan has a question or two to tie down if you don’t mind. I realize this has been a long hearing for you and your family. Senator Sullivan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, I wanted to make sure when you tell your kids that you went through this confirmation hearing, that you said that it went through two rounds of tough questioning, so this is the second round. So thank you for, Mr. Chairman, indulging me.

I think you are doing a great job right now. You are answering a lot of questions. Very quickly, the Wicker plan that you have reviewed is outstanding. I am not just saying that because that is our Chairman. You are hearing Senator Banks and Senator Schmitt, many of us, Democrats as well like that. Can you commit to work with this Committee on getting to those kind of levels, the 3 to 5 percent of GDP that he puts forward? It is an excellent plan on shipbuilding, on industrial base, all the things we have talked about. I know that you have got to go through the process, but just to fight for that. You might lose, but, you know, we hear about 8 percent cuts. I have talked to Secretary Hegseth. That is not what he is planning.

But we want to hear from the Pentagon officials that they will fight for this because a lot of these choices that we are having to make that you are eloquently talking about, they become less difficult if we have a stronger industrial base and stronger military.

Mr. COLBY. Yes, Senator, I commit to advocating for the higher defense levels that I think are consistent with, you know, what our security dictates. Of course, what exactly that would be, I can’t say both because I don’t know, but also it wouldn’t ultimately be up to

me. But I think we are in a situation where more robust levels of defense spending are clearly in order.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay. Good. Let me go back to Taiwan very briefly. I would agree—and you talked about it earlier—it is the KMT—and it is the KMT, by the way. They control the legislature. It is different from the President's party. They are playing a dangerous game on their defense budget, and if anyone from Taiwan is watching this hearing, they need to realize they are playing a dangerous game, okay? Cutting defense spending right now is not the right signal. We all agree with that.

As you know, the Taiwan Relations Act requires the United States to make weapons available to Taiwan for its defense. Every Administration since 1979 has pledged to abide by that and has. The Trump administration did a great job its first term. If confirmed, will you work with us to make sure we are going to turn the Taiwanese around, but that we will commit to work with Taiwan and us to comply with the Taiwan Relations Act?

Mr. COLBY. Yes, certainly, Senator, and even more than that, I would make it a special focus to accelerate and revamp and focus those capabilities and expand those weapons transfers and sales and so forth to assist Taiwan in its ability to defend itself. So I have mentioned the pressure that we need to put on Taiwan. I think you are absolutely right, Senator. But we also need to do our part on the U.S. side to make—

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes.

Mr. COLBY.—real capabilities available in a timely fashion, which we—

Senator SULLIVAN. Get those—

Mr. COLBY.—have not done a good job on.

Senator SULLIVAN. Get those weapons out there. I met with the previous President. She had a great statement to me when I talked about will, and she said, will is often a function of training and capability. If you are stronger—

Mr. COLBY. I agree with that.

Senator SULLIVAN.—and you have weapons, we have this giant backlog, for example, of harpoons—

Mr. COLBY. Right.

Senator SULLIVAN.—that we should be getting to the Taiwanese. So I think that is an important point that she made. Will is a function—

Chairman WICKER. Do you have a final question?

Senator SULLIVAN. The final question is the most important of the whole hearing. We are talking about protecting the Homeland, a lot of focus on the southern border, not always a ton of focus on the northern border, my part of the world, Alaska, the Arctic, the North Pacific. But I am sure you have noticed, Mr. Colby, in the last couple years, we have had a huge increase in the incursions of Russian ships, Russian Bear bombers, Chinese strategic bombers doing joint patrols with Russians, joint naval task force, all in the ADIZ and the EEZ of America in the Arctic, in the North Pacific.

President Trump, after he got elected, said, we will, quote, “ensure Alaska gets even more defense investment as we fully rebuild our military, especially as Russia and China are making menacing moves in the Pacific.” This is just an example of how many—the

NORTHCOM commander, the INDOPACOM commander recently testified that they think they are going to see even more of that. We had two Bear bomber incursions in 48 hours 2 weeks ago. Both NORTHCOM and INDOPACOM commander said it is time to look at—not look at. They committed to reopening the Navy base here at Adak, which is a very strategic base.

I would like your commitment to come to Alaska, come up there with me, see all our great military up there, and work with me on strengthening our northern border, in particular, issues like infrastructure at Adak, which will provide our forces the ability to respond to the attack on the northern border, which doesn't get a lot of press.



Mr. COLBY. Well, Senator, you are preaching to the choir on this, and I would be privileged to come visit Alaska with you, and I would be honored to do it—

Senator SULLIVAN. Great.

Mr. COLBY.—if confirmed.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Colby. Good job.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

I would point out, Mr. Colby, that it is cold up there even in the summertime, so bring your long johns.

This is one of the papers that I have produced. It is the second one, “Restoring Freedom’s Forge.” I hope you will agree that the best way to begin immediately getting enough submarines to have in the Pacific and doing so efficiently and using more modern techniques is to explore this very type of innovation.

Mr. COLBY. I do agree, Senator, yes.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. This concludes today's hearing. I would like to thank our witness for his testimony, and thanks to the family. The restrooms are right down the hall.

For the information of members, questions for the record will be due to the Committee within 2 business days at the conclusion of the hearing. We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:17 p.m., the Committee adjourned.]

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

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

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

Answer. My understanding of the duties and functions of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) are based on the U.S. code and custom. Statutorily, the USD(P) is responsible, under the direction of the Secretary of Defense, for directing and supervising:

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

In terms of activities, my understanding of the duties and functions of the USD(P) are to serve as the principal advisor to and lieutenant of the Secretary of Defense on matters of strategy, defense and foreign policy, and alignment of the Department's activities with national strategy and other elements of national power. Within the Department, that means representing the strategy and policy perspective throughout the Department's activities. Outside of the Department, it is to serve as the principal representative of the Department below the Secretary himself to the interagency process, the Congress, and foreign governments on matters of strategy and policy.

More broadly, the purpose of the USD(P) and its predecessor roles, in my understanding, is to ensure that the United States has the right defense strategy; that that strategy is reflected in the joint force's plans, posture, structure, and activities; and that that strategy integrates effectively and logically with the Nation's overall strategy, with the activities and strategies of our allies, and with the threats we face. In a nutshell, the role of the USD(P) is to ensure that the United States follows the tried and true maxim that war and force should be the instrument, and sound policy and strategy the guiding framework. In an era of great power rivalry and the potential for great power war, this function once more takes on profound importance.

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

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

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

Answer. I believe my background is well-suited for the position of USD(P). I have worked my entire career on national security, defense, and foreign policy issues, and have devoted my career to thinking through what I believe are the most important questions facing our Nation's defense.

In terms of experience, I have spent approximately 6 years in full-time government employment. Most recently I served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development from 2017–2018, leading the development and rollout of the 2018 National Defense Strategy. I have also served as a staff member on multiple commissions and participated actively in the national and international debates on U.S. and allied security, including testifying before Congress on a number of occasions. I believe I also have the intellectual preparation for the role, having written and spoken extensively at home and abroad on precisely the topics in the purview of the USD(P), including in my book *The Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict* (Yale University Press, 2021). I have abundant experience engaging with personnel and constituencies relevant to the role, preparing me for the Departmental, interagency, and congressional engagement elements of the position. I have traveled and engaged widely, preparing me for the international aspects of the job. Finally, I have also held a security clearance for effectively my entire adult life, testifying to my trustworthiness and commitment.

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

Answer. I have always worked best with partners and believe in empowering and enabling subordinates to contribute to the shared mission. During the development of the 2018 NDS, for instance, I worked very closely with my deputy, Jim Mitre, who was instrumental in the success of that effort. I would bring that mindset to this position.

The particular duties and responsibilities I would assign to the Deputy USD(P) would, naturally, depend on the individual selected. My understanding is that no nominee has yet been announced, so I cannot say for sure how I would do so. My inclination once a nominee has been identified and confirmed, however, would be to ask that individual to take the lead on a certain set of issues and management responsibilities for which his or her expertise, experiences, and interests are better-suited than my own.

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

Answer. I believe there is a consensus on the broad outlines of the Nation's defense strategy. My understanding is that the Department has, across both the first Trump and Biden terms, largely settled on a defense strategy prioritizing the challenge posed by China while inducing greater allied participation to help address military shortfalls both vis-à-vis Beijing as well as in other theaters against other potential opponents, particularly Russia, Iran, North Korea, and terrorists. There is also agreement on the broad outlines of the need to restore our defense industrial base and that of our allies. Finally, there is broad agreement that we need to better secure our Homeland and our Nation's territorial integrity.

I believe the major challenges I would confront if confirmed as USD(P) would be in attempting to put that strategy into effect, precisely because that strategic consensus has remained largely theoretical rather than a reality. Indeed, the Trump Administration is entering office with the country facing a major "Lippmann Gap": a perilous mismatch between what we have been trying to achieve in the world, on the one hand, and the resources and political will we have to match those aspirations on the other.

Allowing this to go on is a recipe for disaster because, as this Committee has so ably laid out, we and our allies face the potential for multi-front conflict in the coming years, yet we are not as prepared as we should be for such an eventuality. Admiral Paparo recently emphasized that China's preparations for war are becoming disturbingly realistic, and that is only a piece of China's broader preparations for conflict. War with Beijing is certainly not inevitable, but it is very possible, and it would be disastrous for U.S. interests—with the only thing worse than it happening being our losing such a war. At the same time, Russia's military is, as General

Cavoli and others have indicated, battle-hardened and larger than where it stood in 2022. Iran poses a grave threat to our key ally Israel and our interests in the Middle East. North Korea is advancing on its nuclear and missile programs. And we must not neglect the ever-present threat of terrorism. Even worse, these potential opponents are increasingly collaborating.

Yet this takes place in a situation in which the previous administration has made clear that the United States does not have the ability to fight multiple major wars at the same time. This is a simple fact and one with which we are now forced to reckon.

To be clear, the answer to this quandary in my view is not withdrawal or isolationism. To the contrary. Rather, the answer is the realistic, peace through strength, America First agenda that President Trump and his team, including Secretary Hegseth, have laid out. To my understanding, this involves:

- Rebuilding our military's readiness and capabilities;
- Restoring our defense industrial base;
- Encouraging and where necessary pressing our allies to step up to take more responsibility for their own defense; and
- Engaging with our potential adversaries to avoid unnecessary conflict, exploit wedges where possible, and enable a peace through strength outcome.

The problem is that some of these measures will take—at best—many years to pan out, while the threat we face is here and now. As a result, scarcity will persist in key regards with respect to U.S. forces and supporting industry. For this reason, it is a strategic deduction that the United States must prioritize, based on the urgency of the threats we face and the importance of the interests at stake. It is widely agreed that China is the most formidable challenger to the United States. At the same time, the previous Secretary of the Air Force said last fall not only that China was preparing for war, but that he judged the People's Liberation Army would say it is ready by 2027. As Secretary Rubio clearly and rightly stated in his confirmation hearing, there is a real chance of a Chinese attack on Taiwan in the coming years. This is the glaring reality we must face—even as we must also urgently strengthen our Nation's Homeland defenses, not just against China and other State threats, but against illegal migration, narcotics flows, and other persistent threats to the very heart of our Nation.

To return to the question, then, the major strategic challenges I would face, if confirmed, would be:

- How to address and prioritize the China threat in the near term given that the joint force and the defense industrial base are not as ready as we would like, nor are our allies' forces or industries;
- How to do this while robustly strengthening U.S. Homeland defenses and dealing effectively with persistent threats in other important theaters like the Middle East and Europe, including by working with our allies there to take a more leading role in their own security; and
- How to revamp the defense industrial base to attain much better results for our and our allies' forces.

I believe the organizational challenges I would face would be downstream of these strategic challenges. Based on my own experience and observation, I know that not all organizations within the Department or in the U.S. Government, let alone among our allies, have internalized the need to take the steps to make this strategic shift a reality. I therefore believe a major part of the role, if confirmed, would be helping to implement the strategic shift it is widely agreed that the Department needs to make, both within the Department itself and in dealings with the interagency and allies.

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

Answer. I am committed to the President's America First and peace through strength agenda. I believe Secretary Hegseth's focus on the challenge posed by China and securing our territorial integrity are rightly the priorities for the Department. At the same time, the United States should deny Iran gaining a nuclear weapon and be prepared to support our NATO allies and South Korea.

My primary concern with the Department in recent years has not been the formal strategy, which I view as rightly focused on China, but rather the implementation of that strategy. I believe the main problem the Department has faced is not the strategy, but the ability and resolve to follow that strategy through. Making that strategic shift a reality would, if confirmed, be my main focus.

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

Answer. I believe U.S. forces should be postured, stationed, and employed abroad in furtherance of our national strategy designed to benefit Americans' security, freedoms, and prosperity. Given the importance of preventing a hostile or potentially hostile State from gaining hegemony over a key area of the world and undermining those American interests, as well as threats such as terrorism, overseas basing and presence are critical. They should, however, be continually reevaluated to ensure the United States is optimally posturing U.S. forces in the event of conflict, ensuring allies adequately invest in their own security, and do not create costs beyond their benefits.

I regard such evaluation as a critical part of the role of the USD(P).

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. I do.

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. I do.

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. I do.

CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY

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

Answer. I believe civilian control of the military is absolutely critical. The United States is a constitutional republic, and civilian control of the military is rightly an essential part of our republican system. I believe one of the core functions of the USD(P) is to make that civilian control and oversight a reality.

To be clear, it is not the place of civilians to dictate to the military. Rather, the right model, especially in a world of great power rivalry, is a respectful, engaged, and expert discussion and debate. The purpose is to ensure that the conduct of defense and war is an instrument of national policy, and thus democratically accountable, while ensuring our military is the very best it can be by respecting its proper sphere and professional ethos.

Question. If confirmed as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, what specific actions would you take in preparing guidance for and reviewing contingency plans?

Answer. If confirmed, I would actively focus on deep and thoroughgoing reviews of operational and contingency plans. As I stated above, plans for war are not merely a military matter. Of course, they must be that at their core—our forces must be prepared to win. But those plans must be consistent with our national interests and strategy, and that is the role of civilian officials to ensure. I would see my role as USD(P), if confirmed, as ensuring that linkage is tight, consistent with President Trump and the Secretary's agenda.

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

Answer. I believe I have the right experience, attitude, and commitment to do precisely this. I have profound respect for the military, I know my own limits, and I am open to debate and learning. At the same time, though, I have deep background and thinking on defense strategy and policy and our foreign policy, more broadly, and understand the military and its role. I would bring this active, open, and focused perspective to ensure proper civilian control and the alignment of our defense policy, strategy, posture, plans, and the like with our national interests and strategy.

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

Answer. Congress plays an essential role in civilian control of the military. Congress is a source of legitimacy for all confirmed officials, who have been confirmed by democratically elected representatives. More specifically, Congress has made clear its emphasis on the importance of civilian control of the military and is a vital partner in ensuring that remains the case.

Question. Section 901 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 authorized an increase in the number of personnel in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and “sunsetting” the reduction of funding mandated in section 346 of the fiscal year 2016 NDAA. What has the Department done to use these additional flexibilities to increase the number of civilian billets in OSD? In your view, would an increase in the number of personnel assigned to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) enhance civilian control of the military? Please explain your answer.

Answer. I have not had the opportunity to review the staffing situation in OSD(P). If confirmed, I would carefully review the staffing situation in OSD(P) and make recommendations to ensure it is able to conduct its role effectively, including supporting civilian control of the military.

STRATEGY AND FORCE DESIGN

Question. The 2022 National Defense Strategy outlines that the United States faces a rising China, an aggressive Russia, and the continued threat from rogue regimes and global terrorism. The congressional NDS Commission recently testified that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea have formed malign partnerships, 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. The military threat posed by China is the most serious and pressing for the United States. Indeed, both the 2018 and 2022 National Defense Strategies stated that the People’s Republic of China poses the most significant challenge for the U.S. Department of Defense. As discussed previously, this is a matter of bipartisan agreement.

Nor is China solely a long-term threat, even though it is surely that too. Rather, the Chinese military threat has arrived. The most pressing scenario for the Department would be a rapid attempt by China to seize Taiwan by force. While war is not inevitable and it would be my goal, if confirmed, to prevent it while protecting American and allied interests, there is strong reason to think it is very possible, including President Xi Jinping’s stated goal of annexing Taiwan, his directive to the People’s Liberation Army to be ready for such an operation by 2027, and China’s broadscale modernization and buildup of capabilities tailor-made to hold the Joint Force at risk, among many other factors.

Question. What is your assessment of the military threat posed by the Russian Federation?

Answer. The Russian military poses a serious threat to Eastern Europe, including NATO members. Its nuclear, missile, and other asymmetric capabilities also pose a direct military threat to the United States and the rest of NATO, among other allies.

Despite the war in Ukraine and sanctions, the Russian military remains a serious threat and in some respects that threat is increasing vis-a-vis Europe.

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

Answer. A “counter coalition” of China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea has formed and become more cohesive in recent years. These states are supporting and enabling each other in ways that are mutually advantageous. Even worse, this growing collaboration presents a much more serious threat of multi-front war. This is especially problematic because the United States does not have a military sized to fight multiple major wars, and too many of our allies are inadequately prepared. This is a key challenge I would focus on addressing if confirmed as USD(P).

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 correct this situation, if confirmed?

Answer. While I understand that the 2022 NDS was largely consistent with the 2018 version from President Trump’s first term, my assessment is that the strategy’s emphasis on prioritization was not implemented. I think a key challenge I would face, if confirmed, is turning prioritization from an aspiration into a reality

consistent with President Trump's peace through strength and America First agenda and the priorities Secretary Hegseth has already rightly laid out.

Question. The 2022 NDS identified defending the Homeland as the top defense priority.

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

Answer. Defense of the U.S. Homeland is critical and a core mission of the armed forces. Any defense strategy putting the American people first must include defense of the Homeland.

This includes threats from nuclear and conventionally armed missiles, drones, aircraft, and other vectors. The President's Golden Dome initiative is an essential, flagship way to ensure our Homeland is well-defended. This combines both ongoing and legacy capabilities as well as disruptive new capabilities and technologies. We should aggressively pursue them with the vision of ensuring an effective defense of the American Homeland.

At the same time, we must secure our border and halt the unchecked flow of deadly drugs like fentanyl. The Armed Forces can and should play an important role in ensuring our borders are secure and we can effectively combat the scourge of drugs that kill more than 100,000 Americans every year.

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

Answer. Defense support to civil authorities is a vital part of such preparations, and if deterrence fails, defending against and recovering from attacks on the U.S. Homeland. DOD's mission is to defend the Homeland and to project power to fight and win the Nation's wars. War with a peer or near-peer competitor would have serious and direct impact on the Homeland, including kinetic and non-kinetic attacks on military bases, dual-use infrastructure, and civilian targets in the U.S. Homeland. Building resilience at all levels—Federal, State, local, tribal, and territorial—is a vital whole-of-government approach to strengthen domestic entities, which will enable the defense of the Homeland and the effective prosecution of the war.

For these reasons, the Department should be actively preparing for such contingencies and working to prepare for such engagement with and support to civil authorities.

Question. Looking forward, what types of resource shortfalls, if any, are likely to hamper the Department's execution of the 2022 NDS and other national defense priorities, in your view? How would you address or mitigate these shortfalls, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I would regard the development and promulgation of a new NDS as a cardinal responsibility. With the blessing of the President and the Secretary, this would guide our national defense priorities.

While I cannot say what such an NDS would say, Secretary Hegseth's stated priorities already give us clear and sound vectors, including China, the Homeland, and a refocus on lethality. If confirmed, I would see my role as ensuring the Department has the robust funding needed to resource such a strategy, while at the same time ensuring the strategy is not one characterized by "pie in the sky" aspirations.

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

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

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

Question. The 2023 SPC concluded that the U.S. should expedite its ongoing nuclear force modernization activities, modify its strategic nuclear force structure to account for the rapid growth of China's nuclear forces and the unprecedented need

to deter two nuclear-armed peer adversaries, and urgently develop additional theater range nuclear options. Do you agree with the recommendations of the SPC regarding U.S. nuclear forces?

Answer. It is crucial for the United States never to be subject to nuclear blackmail or coercion, let alone attack. We therefore absolutely need a nuclear force able to deter more than one nuclear power. What precisely that entails in light of the State of our industrial base, the needs of our conventional forces, allied capabilities, and other salient factors, would be a primary focus for me, if confirmed as USD(P).

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

Use of Military Force

Question. If confirmed, how would you define your role in making recommendations to the President on the use of military force?

Answer. My understanding is that the USD(P) plays a crucial role in recommendations to the President on the use of military force, through the Secretary of Defense. The USD(P) is the official principally tasked with guiding and overseeing development of military options that the President can use to defend the Nation's interests, in line with our overall foreign policy strategy, including by ensuring any proposed use of military force is clearly and rationally tied to feasible and reasonable political objectives. If confirmed, I would see my role as providing that crucial perspective in this process.

Question. What factors would you consider, if confirmed, in determining which forces of other nations are eligible for collective self-defense by U.S. forces, and under what conditions?

Answer. I would need to study this question more carefully to provide a more definitive answer.

Question. That said, factors I would regard as material for such a determination would include: the geopolitical, military, and other interests of the United States as affected both by the attacked and attacking parties; U.S. treaty and other commitments; and international reactions to both the attack itself and U.S. reactions; among other factors.

What limitations, if any, would you seek to impose on the provision of collective self-defense by U.S. Forces?

Answer. I would need to study this question more carefully to provide a more definitive answer.

That said, I believe in the importance of collective defense as part of overall U.S. strategy, rigorously weighed, applied, and apportioned according to the national interests, our interests in upholding our differentiated credibility, and other factors. That said, U.S. forces should only be committed to conflict for compelling purposes and with clear objectives along the lines laid out in the Weinberger/Powell Doctrine. This would apply to collective defense operations as to any others.

CIVILIAN HARM MITIGATION

Question. In August 2022 the Secretary of Defense issued the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP), which included a detailed set of objectives and initiatives to “improve its approach to mitigating and responding to civilian harm, protecting U.S. national security, and confronting the complex challenges of the modern security environment.”

What is your view on the importance of civilian harm mitigation and response efforts?

Answer. I believe it is in the U.S. national interest, as well as morally right, to seek to reduce civilian harm to the degree possible. While I am not deeply familiar with the CHMR-AP, I value efforts to apply this perspective in ways consistent with military effectiveness and deterrence. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about this effort.

Question. How, in your view, do such efforts relate to operational effectiveness and strategic success?

Answer. I believe it is in the U.S. national interest, as well as morally right, to seek to reduce civilian harm to the degree possible. Organizations that help the Department do this in ways consistent with military effectiveness and deterrence are therefore helpful and to be welcomed. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about this program and seeing how it can be leveraged.

Question. What is your assessment of the progress made by the Department to implement the CHMR-AP to date? What areas do you believe require greater attention or resources to achieve the desired outcomes?

Answer. I have not had the opportunity to be briefed on this but, if confirmed, look forward to learning more about and providing an assessment of its effectiveness and areas for potential improvement.

Question. What role do you believe public transparency plays with respect to accounting for and responding to allegations of civilian casualties resulting from U.S. military operations?

Answer. Public transparency plays an important role in the Department's response to civilian harm. I have been advised that the Department maintains a public-facing webpage where unclassified and releasable DOD policies, reports, and other information related to civilian harm can be readily accessed. Maintaining public transparency through accurate reports and assessments is both valuable in and of itself but also bolsters trust in the U.S. military and provides a mechanism for accountability, which is to be welcomed.

Question. Do you believe the Department of Defense has achieved a sufficient level of transparency on such matters? If not, what additional steps do you believe are necessary?

Answer. I have no reason for concern at this stage, but I have not been briefed on this matter. If confirmed, I would look forward to assessing the matter to ensure there is sufficient transparency properly balanced with military necessity.

Readiness

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

Answer. The problem of balancing the demands of the near term and the medium to longer-term is one of the toughest challenges the Department faces. Due to the possibility of major war, and even simultaneous major conflicts, we are simply not in a position to "take a knee" to invest only for the longer term. We need our forces to be ready now, next year, and over the longer term.

If confirmed as USD(P), I would see my role as ensuring that the Department's readiness and force development efforts are designed to achieve both near and longer-term warfighting readiness goals. This is an area where the USD(P) must take an active role—both to ensure that the demands of the near-term do not consume the long-term, but also vice versa.

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

Answer. I would approach these questions with the above perspective. I would also look to scrutinize operations to ensure the Department is focused on maximizing warfighting readiness against key priorities like deterring China and defending the Homeland.

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?

Answer. I have not had the access to provide an informed answer to this question. But coming to an assessment would be an early priority for me, if confirmed.

Global Force Posture

Question. What is your assessment of the adequacy of the current U.S. global defense posture, particularly as it relates to stationing U.S. military forces overseas, and where would you look to increase or decrease U.S. force posture overseas given current international security dynamics?

Answer. I believe the current U.S. global defense posture is inadequate to the legacy foreign policy we have been pursuing—hence my "Lippmann Gap" reference above. I believe President Trump's America First agenda sets a far more rational and realistic policy while remaining resolutely engaged in the international sphere in a way that puts Americans interests first but also dovetails with the interests of our allies. I believe we can adjust our defense posture to back up the President's

agenda, thus closing the perilous “Lippman Gap.” I would see it as a primary responsibility of mine, if confirmed, to help do just that.

Question. In your view, in the event of a major conflict with a strategic competitor such as China or Russia, what component of DOD would be responsible for real time management of the resulting impacts and necessary adjustments to global force posture?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to provide a clear answer to that question, but I believe Policy would play a very important role in such a context.

Question. In your view, are DOD Components adequately resourced and structured to react at the speed of relevance?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the resourcing of the Department, including the Military Departments, to ensure they are appropriately resourced and structured. If confirmed, I will support the Department receiving the resources necessary to secure the President’s vision of peace through strength and the strategy needed to attain it.

Question. The United States has traditionally been a maritime power, and its large Navy has helped ensure open and free navigation of the world’s oceans by all nations. This freedom of navigation has protected trade and greatly contributed to the stability of the world economy and the prosperity of the American people. However, the Navy is currently nearly 100 hulls short of its current 381 ship requirement, with no plan to meet even the current need before the 2040’s.

What is your perspective on the credibility of U.S. power projection capabilities and our ability to promote stability in critical regions, particularly in comparison to China’s rapidly growing fleet?

Answer. I believe the rapid growth of the Chinese Navy in comparison to the challenges facing our own is a source of deep concern. I also believe the growth of China’s Navy portends not only a direct challenge in the Western Pacific but, if China is successful in dominating in that region, a global power projection to impose Beijing’s will well beyond its own shores. It is critical that the United States reverse this exceptionally dangerous decline in the maritime and overall military balance vis-a-vis China, especially with respect to the Western Pacific.

Question. If the United States is unable to field a Navy capable of countering the likes of China or Russia, or even consistently counter piracy along the major energy trade routes in the Red Sea and off the Horn of Africa, how do you see this affecting American influence globally? Do you think this could drive countries to look to our adversaries as security guarantors and partners of choice in the future?

Answer. I believe if China is able to secure military dominance first in the Pacific and then beyond, that key countries and regions of the world would turn to Beijing and our interests would be severely undermined.

Question. If confirmed, how would you mitigate the impacts of this reduced capacity, or how will you work with the Secretary of the Navy and other DOD officials to expand Navy fleet size?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work avidly with the Secretary of the Navy and other DOD officials to help reverse this problem, including by providing more focus for demands on the naval operations and revamping the defense industrial base.

Question. In your view, what role do forward-stationed forces play in implementing the NDS and what is the proper balance between forward-stationed, rotationally deployed, and surge forces in executing our defense strategy?

Answer. I believe this is a matter of degree, but I believe forward deployed and stationed forces play a critical role, especially in a denial defense along the first island chain. Such forces are present in operationally relevant timelines, provide a strong local defense that is difficult and painful to dislodge, and bolster allied confidence in our resolve.

Question. As the world’s preeminent Air Force for much of the past century, the U.S. has long depended on the ability to reliably project combat power and support rapid logistics across the globe. The previous Secretary of the Air Force stated that the U.S. Air Force is too small and too old to perform the missions it has been assigned. Do you agree with this assessment? If so, what are the implications for U.S. national security if the Air Force is unable to perform such missions effectively in the future?

Answer. The Air Force plays an essential role in American national and defense strategy. It seems beyond dispute that the Air Force is, as former Secretary Kendall put it, too small and old. I believe it is imperative for the Nation to have an Air Force able to play its essential role in key missions such as nuclear deterrence, China, and defending the Homeland.

If confirmed, I would work avidly with the Secretary of the Air Force and other DOD officials to revivify and modernize the Air Force, including by revamping the defense industrial base.

Alliances and Partnerships

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

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

Answer. I believe alliances are key. But, as President Trump rightly emphasizes, we must put our alliances on a more realistic and businesslike foundation. For too long there has been profound imbalances between what America does and what too many of our allies do (with noble exceptions like Israel, Poland, and South Korea). This cannot go on, both because of the growth of our potential opponents' military power and because of the valid perceptions of unfairness by Americans.

I believe the best way to sustain our alliances for the near term and in the long haul is to re-baseline them, putting them on a much more equitable footing. In this model, our allies do more, and we look more to their perspectives as well. I believe this is a return to our successful alliance policy in the cold war, when we made a huge focus of ensuring allies did their part.

If confirmed, I would regard promoting this approach and helping our allies adapt to it as central to my responsibilities. My experience dealing with allies in and out of government I believe prepares me well for this role.

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 am not in a position at this stage to give specific recommendations. If confirmed, I would make this a priority as part of the various key reviews I would lead in the first year or so of my tenure.

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 believe this is a very important issue. Developing our own defense industrial base and that of our allies is a win-win. Our alliance system is much stronger than the counter-coalition we face. But our industrial base is not in good enough shape on its own to provide the military resources for it. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to figure out how we can better leverage FMS and industrial base integration for this purpose.

Question. Authorities to conduct research and cooperative development are vested in the offices of the Under Secretaries for Acquisition & Sustainment, as well as Research & Engineering. How would you propose improving coordination and synchronization to better leverage their authorities and technical expertise to support Policy's role in negotiating and executing agreements?

Answer. Policy coordination with A&S and R&E is essential for the success of the Department as a whole. While I do not have specific recommendations at this stage, I would strive, if confirmed, to ensure such cooperation.

Question. What are your views of the reforms underway within the security cooperation workforce and the Defense Security Cooperation University?

Answer. I do not presently have a view on this topic, given that I have not been briefed on it, but would be happy to provide one if confirmed and once I am able to take such briefings.

NATIONAL SECURITY INVESTMENT & DEFENSE INDUSTRY

Investment

Question. Multiple independent commissions, including congressional commissions on the National Defense Strategy, Reforms to the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE), and the Strategic Posture of the United States have highlighted that U.S. defense investments are inadequate for addressing the international security threats facing the United States. These conclusions have been echoed by many Members of Congress. 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 of at least 3 to 5 percent is necessary to meet global security challenges without incurring significant additional risk?

Answer. I have supported and do support robust defense spending that allows us to meet our national defense strategy. If confirmed, I will advocate for the robust defense spending needed to implement the NDS that President Trump and Secretary Hegseth promulgate.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would prioritize the development of a new National Defense Strategy and assess required resources against our ability to meet the President's strategic goals, especially first and foremost defending the Homeland and deterring China.

Question. Many observers assert that the only way to force DOD leaders to make the "hard choices" to divest of lower priority or underperforming programs, is to constrain the Department fiscally. Do you believe that this approach leads to more effective and efficient decisionmaking by DOD leaders?

Answer. I do not. I believe we have run this experiment, and it did not lead to such results. A more efficient DOD is very much to be welcomed, but I do not think a "starvation diet" is the most effective or prudent way to pursue it.

Question. The PPBE process has remained fundamentally unchanged since its inception more than half a century ago. The congressionally appointed Commission on PPBE Reform released its final report in March 2024, and Congress has directed DOD to establish a cross-functional team to oversee the implementation of the Commission's recommendations.

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. I believe this is a very important commission whose work should be closely studied and considered for implementation. Before providing any recommendations, I would need to investigate the matter more carefully, if confirmed, once I am able to be briefed and better understand the "lay of the land" within the Department.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would work to implement the recommendations of the Commission that are consistent with the President and Secretary's priorities and the improved functioning of the Department.

Question. How would you propose the Department expedite the identification, integration and day-to-day use of modern data analysis tools and techniques to help the Department make more timely and adaptive data-informed decisionmaking that are aligned to the various planning and risk management processes in the Department?

Answer. Such tools are highly useful in the contemporary context. If confirmed, I would seek to adapt them to the Department's processes wherever advisable.

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. The State Department and other non-DoD departments and agencies play crucial roles in U.S. national security policy. If confirmed, I would work closely with my colleagues across the government to implement the President's America First and peace through strength agenda.

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

Answer. I am not able to provide an informed opinion regarding the resourcing of non-DoD organizations.

Defense Innovation

Question. U.S. superiority in key areas of innovation is decreasing or has disappeared. Our competitors are engaging in aggressive military modernization and advanced weaponry development. DOD has identified 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 critical technologies suitable for national defense purposes is occurring outside of the traditional defense industry.

How should Policy be working with others in DOD, like the USD(R&E) and USD(A&S), to understand and coordinate the technical direction for those critical

technology areas with the overarching policy goals and strategies being developed and executed by the USD(Policy)?

Answer. It is my understanding that the DOD has not leveraged the full potential of our industrial and innovation bases to deliver military capabilities at the pace and scale necessary to meet Secretary Hegseth's defense priorities. If confirmed, I would work with stakeholders from across the Department to advocate for the rapid development and fielding of defense capabilities in alignment with the Secretary's strategic guidance and policy priorities.

Question. In your view, what technologies do you see as having the greatest military impact in the future? Do you believe the Department of Defense is effectively developing this technology in comparison to our adversaries?

Answer. Exploiting technology is crucial for our military's success and thus for peace through strength. While I am not in a position to provide a definitive assessment on these questions at this stage, if confirmed I would regard promoting this line of effort as a critical part of my role and would be happy to engage further on the topic.

NUCLEAR

Nuclear Policy and Force Modernization

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.

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

Question. 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 increasingly severe threat to the United States and its allies and partners.

Question. Do you believe our current deterrence policy and force structure effectively accounts for two near peer nuclear competitors? If not, do you believe the U.S. will require additional capabilities, a numerically larger force than exists today, or a combination of both?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to assess the adequacy of our current nuclear deterrent. I do, however, believe that our strategic forces must be able to deter multiple nuclear-armed powers, especially the most capable ones. Determining what that requires and what changes that entails in our strategy, modernization plans, and posture would be top priorities for me, if confirmed.

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

Answer. I believe it is very important that the United States have nuclear options below the strategic level. My understanding is that our forces in this area have shrunk and atrophied considerably since the end of the cold war. If confirmed, I would seek to understand what gaps we might have in this area and determine how best to remedy them.

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. I do.

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

Answer. I do commit to advocating, if confirmed, for fully funding efforts to modernize our nuclear forces, while also meeting the other top priorities for the Department, especially a conventional denial defense force vis-à-vis China and defending the Homeland.

Question. Successive Nuclear Posture Reviews have concluded that the adoption of a nuclear “No First Use” (NFU) policy by the United States is not advisable. Do you believe a NFU policy would be appropriate for the United States, and what do you believe would be the implications of such a policy on the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence commitments to our allies?

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

Question. A core tenet of U.S. nuclear strategy since the cold war has been that only the President of the United States can authorize or terminate the use of U.S. nuclear weapons. This principle is based on preserving civilian control of military forces and ensuring that the United States maintains the ability to respond in a timely manner to strategic attacks. However, there have been periodic calls to revise this policy in order to constrain Presidential authority to direct the employment of nuclear weapons. Do you believe the president should be the sole authority for authorizing and terminating the use of U.S. nuclear weapons?

Answer. Yes.

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

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

Answer. While I do not have access to this information, my impression is that the principal challenges are simultaneously fielding a modern nuclear triad and sustaining legacy nuclear forces while also rebuilding the cold war-era nuclear weapons infrastructure into a responsive and resilient enterprise. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the other members of the NWC to address these challenges.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to fully participating in NWC matters and personally attending meetings?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to Policy’s ongoing active involvement in the NWC and ensuring it has top level attention.

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.

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

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

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. I do.

Question. The Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act restructured the existing Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs into the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Deterrence, Chemical, and Biological Defense Policy and Programs. Congress took this action to cut through bureaucratic stovepipes in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and designate a single official as the principal civilian staff assistant responsible for nuclear policies, programs, and operations.

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

Answer. I am committed to working with stakeholders in the Department to establish the new structure consistent with statutory authority. If confirmed, I would work with OSD colleagues to keep Congress informed on the status of DOD’s efforts and would welcome insights and inputs from Members.

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 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, DOD should seek arms control agreements that enhance U.S. security, are stabilizing, and are verifiable.

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

Answer. Russian tactical nuclear weapons pose a serious challenge to NATO security and potentially give Moscow significant advantages in a limited war. Future arms control engagements with Moscow, if they are initiated, should take these forces into careful and serious account.

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

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

Answer. The United States should pursue arms control when it is in U.S. interests to do so. I believe any future nuclear arms control effort must fully account for China's dramatic nuclear expansion.

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

Answer. My understanding is that both sides have ceased implementation of the New START Treaty's verification mechanisms, and the United States is unable to confirm that Russia is abiding by all of the Treaty's limits. I believe the United States should be open to arms control with Russia and China if such measures genuinely promote U.S. interests and security and those of our allies. I am not in a position at this stage to assess the likelihood of such measures with Moscow and/or Beijing.

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

Answer. While I believe it is imprudent to rule anything out in considering negotiations, I am highly skeptical about such potential constraints on U.S. forces. My sense is that arms control has been most successful from the U.S. point of view when focused on nuclear forces.

SPACE

Question. China and Russia are training and equipping their military space forces and fielding new anti-satellite weapons to hold U.S. and allied space operations and activities at risk, even as they push for international agreements on the non-weaponization of space.

In your view, how would you characterize the strategic environment as it pertains to the space domain?

Answer. Space is vital for U.S. military operations. China, in particular, as well as Russia have become far more active and capable in space. Enabling U.S. military operations in, from, and through space in the face of these challenges thus must be a top priority for the Department.

Question. How would you assess current DOD readiness to counter adversary activities in space?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Question. What do you perceive as the most significant threats to U.S. national security space satellites? To commercial space systems owned by U.S. companies?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, but I believe Chinese and Russian and counterspace capabilities are the most formidable dangers.

Question. The DOD is increasingly reliant on commercial space systems which can become enemy combatants in a time of conflict.

Do you have concerns about over-reliance on commercial systems supporting DOD operations, especially in a time of conflict who may find it in the companies best commercial interest to cease support to the Department?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Question. What are the Department's responsibilities in defense of U.S commercial assets in space, especially those the DOD is employing in a time of conflict?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Question. Do you believe the Department should offer indemnity to commercial companies supporting DOD operations?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Question. If confirmed, would you support the development of offensive and defensive space control capabilities to counter threats against such assets?

Answer. Yes, and I would advocate for such capabilities.

Question. Space systems, like other military systems, rely on the availability of sufficient frequency spectrum that is becoming increasingly scarce. If confirmed, how would you work with the Military Departments and Services, the Joint Staff, and other DOD Components to ensure that the Department's frequency spectrum requirements are accounted for and protected in interagency discussions about potential spectrum auctions?

Answer. Access to spectrum is essential to mission effectiveness and vital to our national security. Spectrum is the cornerstone of success in all warfighting domains and, if confirmed, I would always advocate for the requirements of the Joint Force. If confirmed, I would collaborate with Department senior leadership and interagency stakeholders to ensure DOD's continued ability to carry out its critical national security missions.

ELECTRONIC WARFARE

Question. Advances by Russia and China in electronic warfare, particularly in tactical warfighting scenarios, have highlighted Recent attention has been given Department-wide to the importance of electronic warfare, given its use in Ukraine and the importance which China and Russia has placed on it as a tactical warfighting element. What are your views on this matter?

Answer. Electronic warfare is a critical part of modern warfare. Although I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer once I have been briefed on the matter.

Cyber Policy and Authorities

Question. What do you see as the primary cyber policy challenges for the Department and what suggestions do you have for addressing them?

Answer. My understanding is that China poses the most significant cyber threat to the Department and to the Nation in cyberspace. Other nation-states, including Russia, Iran, and North Korea, also present cyber threats.

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question of how to meet these cyber challenges, but I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Question. As pertaining to cyber policies and governance, what is your understanding of the USD(P)'s relationship with:

The Commander of U.S. Cyber Command

Answer. My understanding is that the Commander of U.S. Cyber Command is responsible for the planning and execution of military cyberspace missions, serving as the cyberspace operations joint force provider and joint force trainer. If confirmed, I would look forward to working closely with the Commander of U.S. Cyber Command on all policy issues affecting the Command's ability to achieve national security objectives.

Question. The DOD Chief Information Officer

Answer. My understanding is that the DOD Chief Information Officer (DoD CIO) is the principal staff assistant and senior advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense for information technology (IT) and spectrum. If confirmed, I would intend to foster a close relationship with the DOD CIO to strengthen governance of information systems, information technology, spectrum matters,

networking, information assurance, cybersecurity, communicates, and cyber capability architectures of the Department.

Question. The Military Service Principal Cyber Advisors

Answer. My understanding of the role of the Military Service Principal Cyber Advisors (PCA) is to address cyber readiness, capabilities, budget, and strategy for their respective services. If confirmed, I would plan to work closely with the Service PCAs, through the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy (ASD(CP)) in his or her role as the Principal Cyber Advisor to the Secretary of Defense, on developing and implementing policies and strategies to synchronize these efforts across the Department of Defense.

Question. The Director for the Defense Cyber Crime Center (DC3)

Answer. My understanding is that the Defense Cyber Crime Center (DC3) is a Federal Cyber Center, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy oversees the Department of Defense's role as the Sector Risk Management Agency for the Defense Industrial Base (DIB). Both roles share responsibility for defense critical infrastructure protection matters. If confirmed, I would ensure that we are fully aligned in efforts to protect the DIB from malicious cyber activity.

Question. The Director of Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) at DHS

Answer. My understanding is that the DOD's relationship with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is essential to ensuring the cybersecurity of U.S. critical infrastructure systems. If confirmed, I would ensure a constructive relationship with DHS that encourages expanded coordination and communication between the Departments. I would also ensure DOD is postured to address requests for assistance from DHS and other Federal civilian agencies.

Question. The National Cyber Director

Answer. My understanding is that the National Cyber Director is the principal advisor to the President on cybersecurity policy and strategy and leads whole-of-government coordination of programs and policies to improve the cybersecurity posture of the United States, increase information and communications technology security, understand and deter malicious cyber activity, and advance diplomatic and other efforts to develop norms and international consensus around responsible State behavior in cyberspace, among other matters. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the Office of the National Cyber Director to achieve the President's cybersecurity objectives and build an enduring advantage for the Nation in cyberspace.

Question. The Fiscal Year 2023 NDAA created the position of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy to elevate the visibility and advocacy of cyber issues, including within the Policy bureaucracy.

What are your views on the position and what role will it have in the policy priorities within your office?

Answer. My understanding is that the ASD(CP) is the senior official responsible for overall supervision of DOD policy for cyber issues as specified in 10 U.S.C. § 138 and serves concurrently as the Principal Cyber Advisor to the Secretary of Defense as described in 10 U.S.C. § 392a. The ASD(CP) oversees two subordinate offices: the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Cyber Policy (DASD Cyber Policy) and the Office of the Principal Cyber Advisor (OPCA).

I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question as to this office's role in the policy priorities in OSD(P), but I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Question. Do you believe that position is adequately resourced and staffed to meet its responsibilities, especially in comparison to the resources and staffing of other assistant secretary positions within your purview?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Question. What is your understanding of how the authorities for the ASD for Cyber Policy are deconflicted with the information assurance responsibilities in the DOD CIO office?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Question. Do you have any specific priorities that you intend to have them take the lead on?

Answer. At this stage, I do not. If confirmed, I would work closely with the DOD CIO, through the ASD(CP), to ensure the Department is postured to implement the President's priorities in cyberspace.

Question. Given the difficulty in anticipating and defending against cyber attacks, many suggest that the Department of Defense should rely more on a policy of deterrence to protect its and the Nation's critical systems.

Do you believe that deterrence is possible in cyberspace?

Answer. I do. As in other domains, deterrence can be made more effective through a combination of denial, resilience, credible threats of retaliation, third party pressure, and other measures. Although not foolproof, I believe this is a fruitful area for policy development and implementation.

Question. Do you believe that the escalation dynamics in cyber differs significantly from our nuclear or other conventional conflict escalation dynamics?

Answer. I believe that the fundamentals of escalation and deterrence are, broadly speaking, similar across domains, but naturally the practical nature of escalation and deterrence in a domain like cyber is quite distinct from the nuclear and conventional military domains.

Question. What do you see as the policy, authority or technical limitations potentially impeding our cyberspace deterrence policy?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I believe the Department needs to have the authorities to ensure it can defend the Nation and the joint force. If confirmed, I would look to enable and promote our ability to deter and, as necessary, act effectively and resolutely in cyberspace.

Question. Do you believe that the Department's current capabilities, policies, doctrine, and authorities allow for effective cyber deterrence? If not, what steps should DOD take to address any shortfalls?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

Question. What are your views on deterrence relationships across domains, and do you believe State actors perceive cross domain threats as credible?

Answer. I believe deterrence across domains is certainly possible, though often more difficult. The most effective deterrent threats tend to be closely linked to the form and location of the provocation, although in the past we have effectively employed cross-domain deterrence. It is important that we ensure our threats are credible but also that we not unduly limit our ability to deter.

Question. In your view, is the current scale and frequency of cyber attacks on the Department and on the Nation tolerable?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, but I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer. That said, I believe cyber-attacks against the United States are of grave concern, and I would regard it as a critical part of my role, if confirmed, to improve our Nation's defenses and deterrent against them.

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

Question. 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. Although I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

That said, 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 cyberattacks against the Nation. The Cyber Mission Force (CMF) is primarily charged with defending forward while DHS and law enforcement are lead for Homeland security with DOD support.

If confirmed, I would review the status of the Cyber Mission Force and ensure that DOD is appropriately postured and resourced to support DHS and law enforcement when requested to protect the Nation from cyberattacks.

I understand DOD and the CMF's priorities are defending against cyber threats with strategic or military implications. This includes threats to the defense industrial base, nuclear command and control, and the ability to project U.S. power globally. Effective national cybersecurity clearly demands close partnership between DOD and other entities, and I would be committed to fostering this collaboration if I am confirmed.

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 am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

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

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, but I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer. That said, I believe it is critical for the United States to have robust, effective, and second-to-none offensive and defense cyber capabilities and, if confirmed, would focus on ensuring this is the case.

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. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

That said, I believe it is vital for DOD to focus on its core missions of defending the Nation and the joint force.

I also believe the experience of recent years should make us very skeptical of governmental efforts to engage on social media with the purpose of foreign influence. This has disturbing implications in recent years, and I believe it is important for DOD to zealously guard against any activities that would undermine or infringe on Americans' rights, liberties, or free expression.

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

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

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

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer. If confirmed, I would support the Department's efforts to work with Federal law enforcement agencies to review the extent and ramifications of the Salt Typhoon compromise and generate effective and robust response options and to prevent future such intrusions.

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 not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

That said, I am greatly concerned about the public reporting on Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon. If confirmed, I would work with other elements of DOD and other agencies to ensure we are better defended against such disturbing intrusions.

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

Answer. I understand that the dual-hat relationship places the same individual in charge of the National Security Agency (NSA) and CYBERCOM. If confirmed, I would support continued consultations with Congress and DOD leadership on this important issue and work to ensure DOD is appropriately structured to meet the Nation's requirements.

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

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question, but I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

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

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

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

What is your understanding of how DOD has been supporting the National Cyber Director?

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

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

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

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

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

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer. That said, I am committed to ensuring Congress has the information it needs to conduct adequate oversight.

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

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

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

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give an informed answer to this important question. I see it as an important issue and I would, if confirmed, be prepared to provide a fuller answer.

INTEGRATED AIR & 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 U.S. forces abroad.

If confirmed as USD(P), what would be your priorities for U.S. missile defense capabilities for the Homeland?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority would be to deliver on the President's Executive Order issued on January 27, 2025, calling for the development and fielding of a next generation missile defense shield for America. My objective would be to ensure that Homeland missile defenses place the burden of escalation upon the adversary, thereby strengthening deterrence and providing greater security for the American people.

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

Answer. This is an important issue, and I would, if confirmed, work with all stakeholders to ensure that the roles, responsibilities, and authorities for IAMD are assigned to the right Services and agencies. I support the President's initiative, as outlined in the Executive Order issued on January 27, to review the relevant authorities and organization of the Department to develop and deploy capabilities with necessary speed to develop and deploy a next-generation missile defense shield.

Question. Current U.S. missile defense policy is focused on deterring North Korea and Iran while reserving our nuclear deterrent against missile threats from Russia and China. However, there are growing calls to reevaluate this policy given the changes in the global threat environment, including the 2023 Strategic Posture Commission, which recommended construction of a Homeland integrated air and missile defense architecture.

What are your views on this policy, especially in light of Russia's recent statements and actions in Ukraine, as well as China's and North Korea's ongoing expansion of their respective nuclear and missile forces?

Answer. Improving U.S. Homeland missile defense systems is vital to countering growing rogue State threats from countries like North Korea. The United States must also, however, account for the growth of advanced Chinese and Russian nu-

clear and missile arsenals. The President's Executive Order 14186 establishes clear policy for the United States to defend the U.S. Homeland, its citizens, and its critical infrastructure, against foreign aerial attack from any source. I fully support this policy shift.

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. If confirmed, I would work with stakeholders throughout the Department to ensure that the roles and responsibilities for IAMD and base defense are assigned to the right Services and agencies in accordance with the Administration's Executive Order issued on January 27, 2025.

Question. Over the past several years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of unmanned aerial systems operating, both lawfully and unlawfully, in U.S. airspace domestically and over American military installations overseas.

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

Answer. I am aware that the Department recently published a Counter Unmanned Autonomous Systems (UXS) strategy. If confirmed, I would work to ensure policy guidance prioritizes giving commanders the critical information, resourcing, and capabilities they need to defend critical military assets against evolving UAS threats.

Question. If confirmed, will you commit to working with Congress and the inter-agency to better clarify U.S. Government roles and responsibilities for detecting, tracking, and if necessary, defeating, UAS within U.S. airspace?

Answer. Yes.

CHINA & THE INDO-PACIFIC

China

Question. The 2022 NDS describes the People's Republic of China (PRC) as "the most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security" and states "The PRC seeks to undermine U.S. alliances and security partnership in the Indo-Pacific region, and leverage its growing capabilities, including its economic influence and the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) growing strength and military footprint, to coerce its neighbors and threaten their interest."

How would you characterize the current overall U.S. relationship with China?

Answer. I agree that China is "the most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security." Conflict with China is not inevitable, but it is very possible. It must be the top priority of the Department to address this challenge, with the goal of achieving and sustaining peace through strength.

China has embarked on an historic military buildup based on its enormous economy, which includes the world's largest industrial base. It is preparing for confrontation with the United States. The locus of such a war, should it happen, would be the Western Pacific. China is attempting to build an economy that minimizes its exposure to and maximizes its leverage over the outside world. Beijing's goals appear to be regional hegemony in Asia first, and then global preeminence, supplanting the United States, with devastating ramifications for Americans. This is the nature of the profound challenge.

At the same time, China has deep interests in avoiding war with the United States. Such a war would be extraordinarily risky and costly for China and could be catastrophic. President Trump is pursuing the right approach to Beijing, which is a combination of peace—an openness to dialog and negotiations, cabinining the rivalry rather than unnecessarily intensifying it, and the like—and strength—restoring and focusing our military on deterring China and strengthening our economy, including by diminishing China's leverage over it.

Question. What do you believe are the objectives of China's rapid increase in defense spending and its overall military modernization program?

Answer. I believe China is preparing for war with the United States in order to have the option to forcibly eject the United States first from the Western Pacific/East Asia region and, from that position of strength, to establish China's global preeminence. This is not a dead-set objective, in my view, but one that Beijing would pursue if it could attain it at a reasonable cost.

It is the job of DOD to persuade China that such an effort would fail, making war much less likely because Beijing would see it is futile.

Question. What are the strategic implications of the rapid modernization of Chinese nuclear weapons that are set to potentially triple by 2030, and what approach should the United States take to address those implications, in your view?

Answer. China's nuclear breakout, coupled with its massive conventional military buildup and its efforts to make itself economically self-reliant, are profoundly worrying. If China could establish strategic deterrence vis-a-vis the United States while establishing conventional dominance in the Western Pacific, it could attain hegemony over Asia. From there, it could effectively challenge America to establish its global dominance. China's nuclear forces are a crucial part of that strategy.

The United States must respond by modernizing its own nuclear forces, focusing and advancing its conventional forces for a first island chain denial defense, and strongly press its allies—especially Japan and Taiwan—to dramatically increase their defenses.

Question. Is the current posture of U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to effectively deter aggression by the PRC? Please explain your answer.

Answer. I am not currently in a position to give a definitive answer to this important question. I am very concerned, however, that there are solid reasons to worry that the answer is no.

Question. In your assessment, what are the priority investments DOD could make that would implement the NDS and improve the military balance in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. Restoring our military edge for a denial defense along the first island chain must be the top priority for U.S. and Asian allied conventional forces. I am not in a position to say what particular investments are needed for this. But I would stress that we cannot have a single-threaded solution to the problem of China's military challenge. It will take a variety of types of forces, concepts, locations, posture, etc. to effectively deter and, if necessary, give the President credible options to defeat a Chinese assault in the first island chain.

Question. In your view, what are the key areas in which each Military Service must improve in order to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to prevail in a potential conflict with China?

Answer. I am not in a position to say what particular investments are needed for this. But I would stress that we cannot have a single-threaded solution to the problem of China's military challenge. It will take a variety of types of forces, concepts, locations, posture, etc. to effectively deter and, if necessary, give the President credible options to defeat a Chinese assault in the first island chain.

Question. What is your assessment of the current State of U.S.-China military-to-military relations?

Answer. I am not in a position to answer this question. I can, however, express my skepticism as to the materiality of such relations, given that Sino-U.S. rivalry is rooted in geopolitical factors and, in both China and the United States, the top authorities are civilians.

Question. What do you believe should be the objectives of U.S.-China military-to-military dialog? What are the limitations on this kind of dialog?

Answer. Please see the response to the previous question.

Question. In what technology areas are you most concerned about the erosion of U.S. advantages?

Answer. Based on public sources, I am concerned about the erosion of U.S. technology advantages more or less across the board. I am of the view that we should not underestimate China's abilities in the technology area or otherwise.

Question. Should the United States revisit or change its "one China" policy, in your view?

Answer. The President has made clear his agenda of America First and peace through strength. The "one China" policy, in my view, is perfectly satisfactory for those purposes. Changing that policy risks dramatically intensifying the already very dangerous rivalry with China for negligible benefits to Americans.

Question. What should the United States do, both unilaterally, and in coordination with allies and partners, to counter the increasing challenge posed by China in the South China and East China Seas?

Answer. The most important thing the United States and its allies can do is ensure they have sufficient military forces to conduct a denial defense against a Chinese assault against one of our allies. If we do this, then Beijing's attempts to expand its influence and dominate its neighbors will be resistible. If we do not, they will not. Other elements of national power will be important, but this—military power—is the crucial foundation.

Question. What is your current assessment of the risk of a critical logistics failure in any conflict with China?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question but believe it is a very concerning possibility.

Question. What is your assessment of China's increasing military presence overseas, including its base in Djibouti and other infrastructure projects across the Indian Ocean?

Answer. I believe China is very likely to seek to expand its military presence overseas in pursuit of an ability to secure its international trade and ultimately establish hegemony over Asia and pursue preeminence globally. Beijing has sought basing locations not only in its region, but increasingly around the world. China poses ultimately a global challenge, but the nub of the military problem is in the Western Pacific. If the United States and its allies can check Beijing's military power projection there, then China's broader presence can be advantageously managed. If the Western Pacific and Asia fall under China's control, however, then China is likely to be in a very strong position to expand its dominating influence much farther.

Question. What non-military activities and resources do you believe are necessary to effectively address the challenge posed by China? Do you believe these current activities are sufficient?

Answer. Non-military efforts are critical to meeting the China challenge. Diplomacy, economics, trade, and many other tools of statecraft all play crucial roles. Our military response is foundational and central, it is not exclusive. Ideally, if we get the military balance right in the Western Pacific, it will recede in importance.

The ability of U.S. ground forces to hold at risk adversary ships and aircraft; intercept missiles aimed at our ships, airfields, ports and other fixed facilities; and provide electronic warfare and communications support for our air and naval forces could enable the United States to present adversaries with our own "anti-access/area denial" (A2/AD) challenge.

Question. What should be the role of ground forces in creating an A2/AD challenge for adversaries within the First Island Chain in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. I believe ground forces play a very important role in a denial defense in the Asia-Pacific. Ground forces are difficult to dislodge, can present effective and different military capabilities, interact closely with local allies and partners, and present other advantages. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the Secretaries of the Army and Navy and other DOD officials to encourage and enable the Army and Marine Corps to move in this direction.

Question. Do you believe the current ground force posture in INDOPACOM is adequate? If not, what would you recommend to bolster it?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would make a point of assessing and engaging on it.

Question. Do you support the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI), including the realignment of some U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam and the buildup of facilities at other locations?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would make a point of assessing and engaging on it.

Question. As Chinese aggression and nuclear capabilities both increase, do you assess that we have adequate military and national security crisis communication channels with senior Chinese leadership to avoid or at least mitigate the threat of rapid strategic escalation?

Answer. My understanding is that the United States and China have functional crisis communications channels, including the Department of Defense's Defense Telephone Link for communications with the PLA. Whether and when senior leaders in China would use these channels during a crisis is not, however, clear. It is important that China joins the United States in initiating and responding to requests for calls in a timely manner to mitigate and avoid the threat of rapid escalation.

Guam & Oceania

Question. What is your understanding of the importance of Guam in a U.S. response to contingencies in the Western Pacific and to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command operations generally?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide a detailed answer, but my understanding is that Guam's role in U.S. military operations in the Western Pacific is crucial for these purposes on multiple levels.

Question. What is your understanding of the State of U.S. military infrastructure, facilities, and defensive capabilities on Guam?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would make it a priority to assess and engage on this issue.

Question. Do you agree that it is critical for infrastructure on Guam to be constructed in a resilient manner so that the U.S. military can utilize Guam as a power projection platform in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. Yes.

Question. What is your understanding of U.S. cooperative efforts across Oceania, and do you believe such efforts are important to long term competition with China in the region?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question, but I do believe engaging with Oceania is critical for U.S. military operations in the Pacific as well as the broader strategic competition with China.

Taiwan

Question. How do you assess the current cross-strait relationship between China and Taiwan, and how can the U.S. help prevent miscalculation on either side?

Answer. I believe there is an increasing threat of a Chinese assault on Taiwan. Beijing is committed to unification with Taiwan for multiple reasons and appears to be resolutely pursuing the ability to forcibly seize the island.

If confirmed, I would see it as a cardinal responsibility to ensure the success of President Trump's policy that China will not attack Taiwan during his tenure. To do this, America must prioritize a denial defense of Taiwan and focus its military assets and resources on that objective. Meantime, Taiwan and Japan in particular must dramatically upgrade their defenses for such a scenario. At the same time, the United States should stick to its "one China" policy while seeking to engage Beijing from a position of strength, as President Trump has already done by reaching out to President Xi Jinping.

Question. How do you assess the current military balance across the Taiwan Strait? What do you believe should be the priorities for U.S. 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. The military balance has deteriorated dramatically from Taiwan's perspective. Accordingly, Taiwan should be dramatically increasing its defense capabilities focused on denying an invasion and riding out a blockade. Taiwan, however, is not doing nearly enough of this. As President Trump has made clear, Taiwan must do much more for its own defense, and focus its efforts on capabilities laser-focused on a denial defense. This is essential for enabling a potential American intervention on Taiwan's behalf.

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. I believe the costs of explicitly committing to Taiwan's defense outweigh its benefits. Current U.S. policy, including the Taiwan Relations Act, the Six Assurances, and decades of statements and activities, makes clear the deep interests the United States has in Taiwan's security. The Department has already rightly specified Taiwan as the "pacing scenario" for the joint force. Together, this indicates a very strong interest in Taiwan's autonomy. Taiwan falling to aggressive Chinese action would constitute a severe blow to American interests.

At the same time, going further than the current declaratory policy poses serious risks on a number of fronts, with limited benefits. Such a move could inflame relations with Beijing, and even offer a pretext for military action. It also risks sending a signal of approval for Taiwan's laggardly efforts on its defense, with dire implications for our collective efforts to rapidly strengthen deterrence and reduce operational risk to U.S. forces.

Ultimately, I would see my role, if confirmed, as providing the President and the Secretary with the best military options to back up the policy of deterring and, if necessary, denying an attack on Taiwan at a reasonable level of cost and risk for the American people. Ultimately this would be a Presidential decision.

Japan

Question. What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with Japan?

Answer. Japan is a vital ally for the United States. It is the largest economy in our alliance network and critically positioned along the first island chain.

Military-to-military relations appear solid, but I believe need to be much further deepened, moving toward a model of integration along the lines of what exists with the South Korean military. Fortunately, there is momentum to build on from the efforts of the last few years under the previous Administration and Japan's own worsening threat perception.

Question. In late 2022, Japan signaled a significant change in its defense posture with the release of a new National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and the Defense Buildup Program.

In your view, how can the United States best support Japan's defense transformation in line with its strategic documents?

Answer. Japan's strategic shift is critical and most welcome, but it is inadequate. Japan is moving toward spending approximately 2 percent of GDP on defense by 2027. This is manifestly inadequate. As the President has rightly said, allies need to spend far more on their own defense, especially those that are most acutely threatened. The President has suggested that Taiwan spend 10 percent and that European NATO spend 5 percent. In that context, it makes little sense for Japan, which is directly threatened by China and North Korea, to spend only 2 percent.

Japan should be spending at least 3 percent of GDP on defense as soon as possible and accelerating the revamp of its military to focus on a denial defense of its own archipelago and collective defense in its region.

The best way for the United States to support this shift is to make these priorities and urgency clear to Tokyo in a constructive but pressing fashion.

Question. Do you support the efforts by the United States and Japan to establish a modernized command-and-control structure, to include an improved U.S. Forces Japan?

Answer. I do, and I believe it should be accelerated and deepened. Japan must take a much more active and expanded role in its own defense and collective defense in the Western Pacific.

Question. 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. Yes.

The Korean Peninsula

Question. How would you describe the value to U.S. national security interests of the U.S. Republic of Korea alliance?

Answer. The United States-ROK alliance is critical for U.S. interests, and a foundation stone of the U.S. geopolitical position in Asia.

It is important that this critical alliance continue to be updated to reflect the broader geopolitical and military circumstances the United States and the ROK face.

Question. What is your assessment of the threat posed by North Korea to regional and global stability?

Answer. North Korea poses a severe direct military threat to South Korea on multiple levels. It also poses a direct nuclear, missile, and unconventional threat to the United States, Japan, and other allies.

Question. Do you believe the transfer of wartime operational control from the U.S. to the Republic of Korea should be conditions-based? If so, and if confirmed, what conditions would you recommend that the Secretary of Defense delineate as the threshold for transfer of control?

Answer. If confirmed, I would need to review this delicate issue carefully. On the whole, however, I believe that President Trump's vision of foreign policy involves empowering capable and willing allies like South Korea, and thus I support efforts to bolster South Korea's role in the alliance.

Question. In your view, are there additional steps that DOD could take to improve U.S. and allied defenses against North Korea's missile capabilities, including through trilateral cooperation between the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan?

Answer. If confirmed, I would review this important issue and make recommendations based on that, particularly building on the President's missile defense initiative.

Question. What are your views on the value of U.S. extended deterrence assurances to the Republic of Korea in deterring Chinese and North Korean aggression, and in helping prevent further proliferation?

Answer. I believe the U.S.-ROK alliance is critical and that together we face a severe threat from North Korea. We must ensure the strategic posture deterring and defending on our behalf and South Korea's is credible and stout. Consistent with the President and Secretary's approach around the world, I believe we need to be clear-eyed, frank, and realistic with our allies about the nature of the threats we face and the allocation of responsibilities among ourselves, in the service of ensuring our alliances are best defended and strategically sustainable. If confirmed, I would review this matter carefully and approach this question in that spirit.

Question. If the Chinese and North Korean nuclear arsenals continue to expand in quantity and capability, do you believe the U.S. should explore additional options for expanding strategic cooperation with the Republic of Korea.

Answer. Yes, I believe we should do so presently, given that both China and North Korea are dramatically increasing their nuclear arsenals.

Australia

Question. What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with Australia?

Answer. My understanding is that it is excellent.

Australia is a core U.S. ally. It has the right strategic approach as reflected in its strategic documents. The main concern the United States should press with Australia, consistent with the President's approach, is higher defense spending. Australia is currently well below the 3 percent level advocated for NATO by NATO Secretary General Rutte, and Canberra faces a far more powerful challenge in China.

Question. In 2021, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States announced the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) partnership with the objective of helping Australia to acquire a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines and increasing collaboration on a range of advanced technology initiatives.

What are your views of the AUKUS partnership?

Answer. As Secretary Hegseth has said, maintaining deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region is not a mission the United States can achieve on our own. Interoperable allies and partners are critical to our forward posture, military capabilities, and combined efforts. AUKUS is a model of the type of cooperation we need to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

I have expressed concerns, as I understand, shared by many on this Committee, regarding U.S. attack submarine force structure and production rates. I believe we must increase U.S. attack submarine production to meet U.S. military requirements in the Indo-Pacific region—to ensure our servicemen and women are as well-armed as possible in the event of war—as well as to meet our obligations under AUKUS Pillar I. If confirmed, I would look forward to learning in more detail about the efforts the Navy is leading to improve submarine construction and sustainment rates and the steps all three involved countries are taking to meet important milestones in the coming years.

I also agree with Secretary Hegseth that AUKUS is a model for how we should engage with our closest allies and partners when it comes to technology cooperation, scaling production, and integrating our industrial bases.

Question. In your view, are there improvements, clarifications, or enhancements that need to be made to effectively implement the AUKUS partnership as intended?

Answer. If confirmed, I would look forward to learning in greater detail the progress that has been made under AUKUS and commit that I would work avidly to remove red tape and knock down barriers so that our cooperation and integration can move forward expeditiously. I commit to working closely with Congress to ensure we have the authorities and resources required.

The Philippines

Question. What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with the Philippines?

Answer. The U.S. alliance with the Philippines is critical. My understanding is that the military-to-military relationship with Manila is strong and continuing to improve.

Question. In your view, are there opportunities to improve our military-to-military cooperation with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, particularly as it relates to issues in the South China Sea?

Answer. I understand that our military-to-military cooperation with the Armed Forces of the Philippines continues to deepen, especially as the Philippines undertakes an ambitious 15-year military modernization program. If confirmed, I would work to identify new avenues of cooperation with Manila.

India

Question. What is your assessment of our military-to-military relationship with India?

Answer. The U.S. deepening partnership with India is of profound importance. If confirmed, I would strive to accelerate and expand this critical partnership. As part of this, I would seek to deepen military-to-military ties.

Question. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or “Quad” between the United States, Japan, India, and Australia is designed to uphold the international rules-based order, ensure freedom of navigation, promote democratic values, improve information sharing, and enhance technological collaboration. What are your views on

the Quad and, in your view, how can it be more effectively utilized as a multilateral platform for addressing challenges in the Indo-Pacific region?

Answer. I think the Quad is very useful and important, and would, if confirmed, seek to expand and elevate its efforts.

RUSSIA, NATO, & EUROPE

European Deterrence Initiative (EDI)

Question. Since 2014 the NDAA has authorized billions of dollars each year under the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI).

In your view, how have EDI investments improved U.S. and allied capability and capacity to deter Russian aggression in the European theater?

Answer. If confirmed, I would review the allocation of resources across the different theaters and recommend investments that best protect U.S. interests, deter conflict, and leverage the investments of our allies to provide for their own defense.

Question. Do you believe continued, robust funding for programs under each of EDI's five lines of effort is required to achieve U.S. national security objectives, including 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 contributed to the capabilities and readiness of U.S. forces in EUCOM, of NATO allies, and of regional partners. If confirmed, I would review the resource requirements necessary to achieve our national security objectives in Europe in light of our global strategic and defense priorities as indicated by President Trump and Secretary Hegseth.

Question. What is your understanding of the mechanisms by which the Department measures progress and evaluates the return on the investments under EDI and its five lines of effort?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would investigate and engage on this issue.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

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

Answer. I believe NATO is of profound importance to the United States. America's Article 5 commitment is of special importance in this context, and I believe the United States should take that commitment with grave seriousness.

At the same time, it is absolutely essential that the European allies and Canada actually step up and live up to their own Article 3 and other commitments. NATO at its inception was never meant to be such a lopsided arrangement, with the United States doing most of the spending and providing even more of the high-end combat power. Nor was this the case during the cold war when the Western European allies fielded very impressive and large militaries. This is neither fair to Americans, nor sustainable, given the threats America faces in other theaters, the force construct of the U.S. armed forces, and the bipartisan consensus here that China must be the priority. Moreover, Europe with its very large economies can do much more and is already, in large part thanks to President Trump's leadership, moving to do so.

In my view, this is precisely the way to sustain NATO for the long-haul: Much greater responsibility by Europe for its own self-defense, with America continuing to play a very important role in the Alliance. If confirmed, I would advocate for this approach, seeking to work closely with European and Canadian allies to manage this transition to a more balanced Alliance while ensuring deterrence and defense capabilities across time.

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

Answer. NATO is and should refocus on being a military alliance to defend the member states in the Euro-Atlantic area. The greatest challenge to meeting those objectives is the combination of the recovery of the now battle-hardened Russian military while too much of Europe (with noble exceptions like Poland and Finland) have not used the time to rearm to levels close to what they fielded in the cold war, even as China poses a grave and near-term threat to U.S. and allied interests in the Pacific.

Question. What are your views on the importance of Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty which states any "European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area"?

Answer. Article 10 outlines the conditions European States must meet to be considered for NATO membership, which requires unanimous consent of all 32 Allies. In my view, any consideration of expanded membership must be evaluated through the lens of the strategic interests of the United States, measuring the benefits of any such admission against the costs and risks of doing so.

Question. In December 2020, NATO reaffirmed the Allies' longstanding position that, "as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance." Do you believe this principle requires the United States to continue to deploy nuclear weapons in NATO countries?

Answer. I support the principle and believe U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe play a key role in extended deterrence.

Question. Do you believe the existing NATO nuclear force posture should be reexamined given Russia's reported deployment of tactical weapons into Belarus?

Answer. These reports are concerning and should be carefully considered in light of what I believe should be continual reevaluations of NATO's force posture, including its nuclear force posture.

Question. If confirmed, how will you encourage NATO Allies to continue to maintain the positive trajectory on defense spending?

Answer. In line with the President's approach, through clarity of message backed by actions consistent with that message. I have spent countless hours in recent years communicating to Europeans in writing, in person, and online the reality of our strategic and defense situation and what it means for them. In a word, the reality of our situation and the recovery of Russian military power means that European Allies must take primary responsibility for defense of the continent. That begins with increasing defense spending. 2 percent is only a modest start. As President Trump has said and European leaders now readily admit, it is not enough. Increasing European and Canadian defense spending to 5 percent is urgently needed. Also critical is expanding our defense industrial base capacity on both sides of the Atlantic. Moreover, we must look not only at spending inputs, as important as those are, but real military capability outputs. Europe must field real and large-scale combat capabilities as quickly as possible. They can do this—the West German military of 1988 is one clear example. Now rhetoric must become reality. I believe this is the way to sustain NATO over the long haul and ensure European security.

Question. In your view, how important is it to align the defense efforts of the European Union (EU) and NATO?

Answer. I believe the United States should be open to a greater EU role in European defense. First, the EU will have to be involved in any increased spending on defense as well as efforts to revamp Europe's defense industrial base. Second, if America is rightly insisting on higher defense spending by Europe, it is only fair for us to be more flexible about the modalities by which Europe does so. Although I do not have specific recommendations on this front, this would be the spirit in which I would approach the matter, if confirmed.

Question. What is your assessment of the adequacy of integrated air and missile defense capabilities and the capacity to defend critical assets in the EUCOM theater? If not, what are the areas of highest risk?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would make it a priority to assess and engage on this issue in light of our global defense requirements in this critical area.

Russia

Question. In your view, which EUCOM and NATO activities most deter Russia and mitigate the Russian threat to NATO Allies and partners?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this question.

Question. In your assessment, are there capability and/or capacity shortfalls in current U.S. posture which affect the U.S. ability to achieve U.S. national security objectives in Europe?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this question.

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

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture re-

view to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this question.

Question. What more should DOD do to counter Russian malign influence in Europe?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this question.

Question. In your assessment, does the United States have sufficient air and missile defense capability and capacity to defend critical infrastructure in EUCOM? What are the areas of highest risk?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture review to assess the effectiveness of existing missions and forces assigned to EUCOM. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this question.

Question. At the 2024 NATO Summit in Washington, DC, the NATO Heads of State and Government issued a declaration identifying China as a “decisive enabler of Russia’s war against Ukraine” and calling out China’s malicious hybrid, cyber, and space activities and nuclear advancements.

What is your view of the current State of Russia-China relations, particularly the “no limits partnership” on political, economic, and military cooperation?

Answer. I believe the Sino-Russian partnership is now deep and has many features of an alliance.

Question. How in your view, does this relationship impact U.S. national security interests in Europe and around the globe?

Answer. The effect of this partnership, especially in concert with their joint deepened relations with Tehran and Pyongyang, is very dangerous.

In particular, this heightens the risk of simultaneous aggression against the United States and its allies. Military conflict spurred by one of these actors could be used deliberately or as an opportunity for another to attack a U.S. ally or allies if they believe U.S. and allied forces are tied down and resources significantly depleted. Prioritization of deterring China, as enshrined in both the 2018 and 2022 NDS, must go from a statement to a reality as the top strategic objective for the United States, making European leadership in deterring Russia in Europe more vital than ever. This is how we cannot only strengthen the NATO alliance but ensure that the United States and our allies are collectively postured to deter effectively or, if necessary, prevail in conflict in multiple theaters simultaneously.

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 in Ukraine and in your opinion what role should the Department of Defense play going forward?

Answer. The war in Ukraine appears, from public reports including reports on U.S. Government assessments, to have been trending in Russia’s favor for some time.

President Trump has made it a priority to end the war in Ukraine as quickly as possible, and I support that effort. If confirmed, I would help ensure that the Department of Defense supports the President and his team in pursuing that goal.

Question. In your view, what would be the implications for European security and for U.S. national security interests if Russia were to prevail in Ukraine?

Answer. Russia remains a serious military threat to U.S. and European security, and thus credible deterrence remains a strategic imperative. As President Trump has repeatedly emphasized, it is vitally important that our European Allies take the lead in providing security assistance to Ukraine and deterring further Russian aggression, including by rapidly increasing their own defense spending and production.

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 defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity and deter future Russian aggression?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support the President, the Secretary, and the Administration team in seeking to forge a sustainable end to the war in Ukraine.

I believe it is important for Ukraine to be well-armed to support its self-defense, even after the war is concluded. As the President and Secretary have made clear, the United States has already contributed a very great deal to Ukraine’s defense, and the United States has urgent and major priorities elsewhere, especially the threat from China and securing our own territorial integrity. In light of this, the

solution, as the President has rightly emphasized, is for Europe to lead on these efforts. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to advance this overall approach.

TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

Question. Transnational criminal organizations are engaged in a wide variety 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?

I believe transnational criminal organizations, including those transporting fentanyl, pose a direct threat to Americans. I believe this is a very important matter for the U.S. Government to address. The United States should do so in ways that are practical, results-oriented, and sustainable. In light of this, the lead organizations are likely normally to be non-DoD. That said, DOD can and should play an important role. If confirmed, I would actively support efforts to reduce the threat posed by such groups, including fentanyl traffickers and the cartels.

Arctic

Question. What, in your view, are U.S. defense interests in the Arctic region?

Answer. Our primary defense interest in the Arctic is to secure the U.S. Homeland. The Arctic region encompasses the northern approaches to North America, and our footprint in Alaska enables vital early warning and missile defense infrastructure. The Arctic is an important region for U.S. power projection to the Indo-Pacific region and to Europe as well, and the region includes significant maritime chokepoints, such as the Bering Strait, which is becoming more economically and militarily relevant.

Question. What threat, if any, do Russian and Chinese activities in the Arctic pose to U.S. security interests?

Answer. The Arctic region has transformed into a venue for strategic competition, with adversaries showing increasing appetite to challenge the United States in ways that could place the U.S. Homeland at risk. The CCP is attempting to strengthen its access and influence in the Arctic through a range of diplomatic, economic, and military activities, including a robust scientific research program with likely civil-military applications. In addition to China, Russia continues to focus on the Arctic region, including basing some of its strategic nuclear forces there. Russia is modernizing its Arctic military infrastructure, investing in weapons systems and new sensor capabilities, and increasing its exercises in the region. Of particular concern is the growing operational cooperation between China and Russia in the vicinity of Alaska, as illustrated by the joint People's Liberation Army Air Force and Russian Air Force bomber patrol operating in the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone in July 2024.

Question. How can the U.S. best leverage and enable our partners in the Arctic to counter Russian and Chinese malign activities in the region?

Answer. I believe we should focus our allies' efforts on areas where their interests and capabilities are naturally strong, rather than try to induce everyone to act everywhere as if their interests are all the same. The Arctic includes the territory of six NATO Allies: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. These allies, as well as others like the United Kingdom, have the interests and will to act in the Arctic. Thus, I would urge these allies to bolster their capacities to act in the region, alongside our own efforts.

Question. Does the Department of Defense have the appropriate capabilities, relationships, and assets to meet its goals in the Arctic? If not, what changes would you propose to better position DOD to support the achievement of U.S. national security objectives in the Arctic?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand the Department of Defense has begun conducting a global force posture review. If confirmed, I would actively lead this effort, including addressing this important question.

Defense Support to Civilian 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 other Federal, State, and Local agencies request DOD support efficient and effective?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. 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 and use of appropriate legal authorities.

Question. In your view, are DOD procedures for evaluating and approving the provision of support requested by a civil authority efficient, effective, and timely?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. I understand that the procedures by which DOD receives and reviews requests from civil authorities, or qualifying entities, allows for efficient, effective, and timely review of the request to ensure that such support is in the national interest, the use of appropriate legal authorities, that support can be adequately resourced, and assess impacts to military readiness. DOD should encourage its partners to, where possible, work with DOD in advance of a formal request to define requirements and ensure that DOD efforts are complementary to civil authorities.

Question. What is your understanding of the factors that are considered in determining whether DOD will provide support to a civil authority?

Answer. My understanding is that 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).

Question. What types of assistance in this context are inappropriate, in your view?

Answer. In my view an inappropriate request would be one that would violate the Constitution, U.S. law, or be likely to result in such a situation.

Question. What role do you believe that DOD should play in addressing security at the southwest border? What aspects of the current DOD role at the southwest border could be improved?

Answer. Border security is national security. In general, DOD's role in the execution of this mission is to provide support to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as the lead Federal agency for immigration enforcement. DOD can provide support to DHS when requested, appropriate, lawful, and approved by the Secretary of Defense. DOD has unique military capabilities that can enhance overall situational awareness and contribute to full operational control of the southern border. Additionally, in Executive Order 14167, the President established that it is the "policy of the United States to ensure that the Armed Forces of the United States prioritize the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the United States along our national borders." I support this policy.

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

Answer. Defense support to civil authorities is a vital part of such preparations, and if deterrence fails, defending against and recovering from attacks on the U.S. Homeland. DOD's mission is to defend the Homeland and to project power to fight and win the Nation's wars. War with a peer or near-peer competitor would have serious and direct impact on the Homeland, including kinetic and non-kinetic attacks on military bases, dual-use infrastructure, and civilian targets in the U.S. Homeland. Building resilience at all levels—Federal, State, local, tribal, and territorial—is a vital whole-of-government approach to strengthen domestic entities, which will enable the defense of the Homeland and the effective prosecution of the war.

For these reasons, the Department should be actively preparing for such contingencies and working to prepare for such engagement with and support to civil authorities.

Question. If confirmed, what recommendations would you make to the President to deter Russian and Chinese influence in the SOUTHCOM AOR?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would ensure the Department is actively working to address this issue, consistent with national policy and other requirements on the Joint Force.

Question. Do you believe these influences threaten hemispheric security and prosperity?

Answer. Yes, I do believe that the influences of China, Russia, and Cuba threaten security and prosperity in this hemisphere.

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 U.S. Government may not be subjected to any interrogation technique or approach, or any treatment related to interrogation, that is not authorized by and listed in the Army Field Manual.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that DOD detainee operations and interrogations comply strictly with these standards?

Answer. Individuals in the custody or control of the U.S. Government may not be subjected to any interrogation technique or approach, or any treatment related to interrogation, that is not authorized by and listed in the Army Field Manual. If confirmed, I would be fully engaged in addressing all matters regarding DOD policy and guidance on DOD detention operations, as outlined for the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in DOD Directive 2310.1E. I would also support the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security in addressing interrogation matters, including interrogation matters that relate to detainee treatment.

Question. What are your views on the continued use of the detention facility at Guantanamo?

Answer. If confirmed, I would support the continued operations of the detention facility at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. As the Department's only long-term detention facility for law of war detainees, I would also ensure the continued safe, humane, and legal care and treatment of detainees through Joint Task Force—Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO).

Question. Executive Order 13567 established the Periodic Review Board (PRB) *Periodic Review of Individuals Detained at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station Pursuant to the Authorization for Use of Military Force process*.

If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to address the cases of detainees already recommended by a PRB for transfer from Guantanamo to another nation?

Answer. As I understand it, there are three detainees remaining at Guantanamo who have been designated as transfer eligible through the PRB process. The authority to transfer a detainee from Guantanamo to his home country or a third country rests with the Secretary of Defense, but also depends on the State Department working through diplomatic efforts to obtain the appropriate security and humane treatment assurances before the transfer can occur. If confirmed, I would follow this Administration's policy guidance on transferring eligible detainees out of Guantanamo.

Question. Will you commit to notifying Congress if a decision is made to transfer a detainee to Guantanamo before any such transfer occurs?

Answer. If confirmed, the Department would continue to notify Congress as required.

Question. In your view, what standard of care should govern the physical and mental health services provided to detainees at Guantanamo, particularly as the detainee population ages?

Answer. Law and Department policy (e.g., DOD Instruction 2310.08, Medical Program Support for Detainee Operations) require the provision of physical and mental health care of individuals detained at Guantanamo that meets applicable standards of care. If confirmed, I would work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to ensure that the Department provides such care as the detainee population ages, consistent with applicable law.

Question. If confirmed, would you ever advise the President to transfer new detainees to Guantanamo, and if so, under what criteria?

Answer. The decision to transfer a detainee to the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, is first initiated by the Combatant Commander to the Secretary of Defense using the Global Screening Criteria approved by the Secretary of Defense in May 2018. Should a Combatant Commander request to send someone to Guantanamo, I would consult with other administration officials to determine policy regarding the transfer of a detainee to Guantanamo.

Question. What are your views on the objectives and outcomes of the Department's Military Commission process?

Answer. The Military Commissions process provides standards and processes for trials of alien unprivileged enemy belligerents for violations of the law of war and other offenses triable by military commission.

If confirmed, to the extent possible, I would work with the Office of Military Commissions to ensure that policy is not an impediment to thorough and speedy justice for those responsible for the 9/11 attacks and other terrorist attacks.

Counternarcotics Activities

Question. DOD serves as lead agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime foreign shipments of drugs flowing toward the United States. On an annual basis, DOD expends nearly \$1 billion to build the counternarcotics capacity of U.S. Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies and certain foreign governments. What changes, if any, should be made to DOD's counternarcotics strategy and supporting activities?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. That said, the flow of drugs, including fentanyl, poses a concrete and dire threat to Americans. If confirmed, I would look forward to assessing DOD's counternarcotics activities and determining where we can improve on and adapt these efforts.

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. DoD's primary focus should be on the flow of drugs headed to the United States. Some drug-trafficking organizations, however, 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. To what extent do you view our allies and partners in the region as partners in countering counternarcotics and other illicit activities?

Answer. The United States shares a common interest in reducing the threat to security and stability posed by illicit trafficking and has a long history of working with partners in the region. I view this continued cooperation as essential to countering drug trafficking and other illicit activities. If confirmed, I would work with other departments and agencies to ensure that DOD efforts are well-integrated as part of a broader, rational, practical, and sustainable strategy for reducing the threat drug flows pose to Americans.

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. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would assess and engage on it.

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. The current situation in Venezuela is very concerning, with the potential to cause further direct challenges to American interests, including through large-scale, unchecked migration. I support the Administration's outreach and policies to address this challenge.

Question. How would you assess Venezuelan relations with China, Cuba, Iran, and Russia vis-&-vis the national interests of the United States?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. But Venezuelan and other regional actors link with China, Cuba, Iran, and Russia are very concerning. I believe President Trump and his team have moved quickly to counter this through a whole-of-government refocus on our Hemisphere and, if confirmed, would work actively to support this.

Colombia

Question. Plan Colombia has enabled the Colombian government to make significant gains against paramilitary forces in Colombia. Additionally, Colombia has become a security exporter in the region due to its advances in capabilities and professionalism.

What are your views regarding: (1) the current military and political situation in Colombia; and (2) the effectiveness and sustainability of ongoing DOD programs in Colombia?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. My understanding is that the U.S.-Colombia bilateral defense relationship is strong, and that DOD has a strong presence in Colombia.

Question. Does the Department require any additional capabilities or legal authorities in Colombia, given developments in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question but, if confirmed, would assess and engage on this important issue.

Question. Are there lessons to be learned from Plan Colombia that may be useful in addressing security and governance challenges elsewhere in the region and beyond?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work to identify such lessons and apply them elsewhere.

Cuba

Question. What is your assessment of Cuba's activities and objectives in the Western Hemisphere?

Answer. I am concerned about Cuba's role and influence in the Western Hemisphere, especially as it faces a dire socioeconomic situation created by the Cuban regime. Cuba has longstanding partnerships with China and Russia that threaten U.S. national security. Cuba has also facilitated and supported Nicolas Maduro's regime in Venezuela. Cuba's close proximity to the United States makes these relationships especially concerning.

Question. Under what circumstances, if any, would you recommend modifications to the security relationship between the United States and Cuba?

Answer. I would not advocate for such modifications absent fundamental change in Havana's orientation to a posture far more aligned with American interests.

MIDDLE EAST & SOUTHWEST ASIA

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

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, the Department is able to execute multiple missions in the Middle East—to include deterring Iran and its proxies.

I understand that the Department is in the process of reviewing global U.S. force posture to reassess the optimal level of forces assigned to CENTCOM in order to achieve regional and national defense strategy goals given the evolving geostrategic environment. If confirmed, I would support this reassessment and advise the Secretary on the force posture necessary to achieve the President's national security objectives.

Question. What opportunities exist for increasing burden-sharing with U.S. regional and European 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. To what extent is the Middle East relevant to great power competition? How should DOD consider countering Russia and China in the Middle East, in your view? Do you believe there are other elements of national power and policy tools that might be useful?

Answer. Given its size, economic resources, centrality in Eurasia, and other factors, the Middle East is relevant to great power competition.

The United States can counter Chinese and Russian involvement in the region through strong partnerships with 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.

Israel

Question. In your opinion, what are U.S. national security objectives in Israel?

Answer. Israel is a key U.S. ally, and the U.S.-Israel alliance is of great importance to the United States. Indeed, Israel is a model ally for the United States in its self-reliance, independence, and fortitude. Enabling Israel's security and ability to defend itself is thus a key U.S. national security objective.

My understanding is 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, including 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 more than 1,200 innocent people, including 46 Americans. The United States should support Israel by providing the security assistance that Israel needs to defeat Hamas and never again allow a Hamas-style attack on Israel. I support measures by the Trump Administration to bolster support to Israel, including through the release of the shipment of 2,000 lb. bombs previously paused. If confirmed, I would build on these efforts to help bolster U.S. support for Israel and its ability to defend itself and ensure its security.

Question. In your opinion, should U.S. activities in Israel be in support of the pursuit of a two-State solution?

Answer. U.S. activities in Israel should be in support of U.S. interests: namely, the defense and security of our model ally Israel and the re-establishment of deterrence in the region. President Trump is a master dealmaker, and I believe his vision presents the best opportunity for a lasting peace in this context. If confirmed, I would support such efforts.

Syria and Iraq

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

Answer. I understand the Department's primary objective in Syria is to prevent credible external terrorist plots against the Homeland by supporting the enduring defeat of ISIS. If confirmed, I would work to review our objectives 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 would support this policy. The U.S. military rightly remains focused on the defeat of ISIS and other threats to the Homeland.

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. I understand that the U.S. military supports the enduring defeat of ISIS through counterterrorism operations and by enabling key ally and partner militaries to assume the burden for addressing terrorist threats within their own countries. More broadly, the enduring defeat of ISIS also requires efforts across whole of government channels, to include intelligence and law enforcement.

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. These partners have historically played a critical role in our efforts to counter ISIS and al Qaeda. If confirmed, I would seek the appropriate briefings on the current role of these forces to ensure a full-picture assessment and determination on the future of U.S. counterterrorism policy.

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

Answer. The deployment of U.S. troops in any foreign country should always be tied to specific objectives and conditions, and, if confirmed, I would guide any potential recommendations to the Secretary of Defense about force deployments by this principle.

Question. In September, the U.S.-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?

Answer. The deployment of U.S. troops in any foreign country should be continually assessed 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.

Question. Do you assess that U.S. forces should remain in Iraq beyond next September? Why or why not?

Answer. The Coalition operations to defeat ISIS have succeeded in the mission to reduce the threat of ISIS in Iraq. As the United States and Iraq agreed in September 2024, Operation INHERENT RESOLVE is scheduled to wind down operations inside Iraq by September 2025. If confirmed, I would ensure that the implications of the agreement between the U.S. and Iraq are considered in the global force posture review.

Iran

Question. What is your understanding of the objectives of the U.S. national security interests with respect to Iran? What is the role of the U.S. military in this strategy?

Answer. I fully 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. The U.S. military, alongside other elements of national power such as sanctions and the capabilities of allies such as Israel, play a critical role in this strategy.

Question. What is your assessment of the current military threat posed by Iran and its 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 unprecedented major missile and drone barrages 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 U.S. forces and those of our partners. Iran also continues to inch closer to gaining a nuclear weapons capability, which the President has rightly insisted must not happen.

Question. Do you believe it remains in the national security interest of the United States to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon?

Answer. I do believe it is in the U.S. interest to deny Iran a nuclear weapon. Iran with a nuclear weapon would be far more dangerous, and it is clearly in our interests and those of our allies to prevent that from happening. The President has rightly been clear the United States will not allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon. As part of this, the President has expressed his readiness to negotiate an agreement with Iran that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. I support the President's policy approach and believe he has the negotiating prowess to achieve this goal, producing a much better agreement than the flawed JCPOA. As part of this, the Department's role is to ensure that the President is armed with the best possible military options to deny Iran a nuclear weapon. If confirmed, I would regard it as my responsibility to ensure that the Secretary and the President have the best possible military options for this purpose.

Question. Are U.S. military forces and capabilities currently deployed to the CENTCOM AOR adequate to deter and, if necessary, respond to threats posed by Iran?

Answer. I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question.

That said, my understanding is that the Department maintains the capability to surge forces anywhere in the world if needed during a crisis. As a result, DOD is able to execute multiple missions in the Middle East—to include deterring Iran and its proxies. 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?

Answer. I believe non-military efforts play a crucial role in addressing the threat posed by Iran. I 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. If confirmed, I would work to ensure the President has the best military options to consider in order to counter Iran's attempt to acquire nuclear weapons and/or conduct other aggressive actions.

Question. How do you view military cooperation between Iran and Russia? In your opinion, has this partnership affected Middle Eastern regional security?

Answer. My understanding is that there is growing military cooperation between Iran and Russia. Iran continues to provide Russia with uncrewed aerial vehicles and ballistic missiles in exchange for a range of Russian support. Russia's support to Iran's space program is particularly concerning, because it could enable Iran to improve its long-range ballistic missile capabilities and eventually threaten the U.S. Homeland. There is also potential Russian provision of advanced weapons to Iran,

such as fighter aircraft and air defenses systems. Should this Russian support continue, it will substantially improve Iran's capabilities to attack U.S. personnel and U.S. partners across the region, consequently driving U.S. partners to pursue acquisition of advanced capabilities to ensure their own defense.

Yemen

Question. What are the U.S. national security interests in Yemen?

Answer. The primary national security interest in Yemen is ensuring that terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIS cannot conduct attacks against the U.S. Homeland. Additionally, Houthi maritime and aerial attacks enabled by Iran's support continue to threaten the territorial defense of Israel and our Gulf partners and freedom of navigation through a critical waterway. If confirmed, I would work to advance the President's policy to cooperate with our regional partners to degrade the Houthi's capabilities and operations, deprive it of resources, and end its attacks on U.S. personnel and civilians, U.S. partners, and maritime shipping in the Red Sea.

Question. If confirmed, how would you adjust or augment the current strategy to be more effective to deter and counter Houthi attacks in the Red Sea?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure that the Department supports the President's policy, as outlined in his executive order on the Houthis, to "cooperate with regional partners to eliminate the Houthis' military capabilities and operations, deprive it of resources, and thereby end its attack on U.S. personnel and civilians, U.S. partners, and maritime shipping in the Red Sea." This will require a whole-of-government effort involving multiple departments and agencies to place additional pressure on the Houthis.

If confirmed, I would support the Department in reviewing U.S. military options to ensure they are resource-informed and meet the President's intent, should the direct military action. It is the Department's job to ensure the President is armed with the best possible military options.

Lebanon

Question. What is your understanding of current U.S. national security objectives in Lebanon?

Answer. My understanding is that the Department's current objectives are to strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty by building its capabilities to counter internal and terrorist threats and combat corruption. Through these capacity building efforts, the United States can reduce regional tensions, improve Israel's security along its northern border, and further degrade Iran's influence in Lebanon.

With the election of President Aoun, Lebanon has formed its most pro-Western, anti-Lebanese Hezbollah government in recent memory. There appears to be an historic opportunity to ensure that Lebanon is no longer a home to terrorists who seek to threaten U.S. and partner forces in the region.

Question. While there has been a cease-fire established between Israel and Hezbollah, Lebanon continues to be at risk of becoming a failed State. What role, if any, should the Department play in increasing stability in Lebanon?

Answer. Building the capability and credibility of Lebanese institutions to be the sole guarantor of Lebanese sovereignty is one pathway to prevent Lebanon from becoming a failed State. If confirmed, I would seek appropriate briefings to further assess and evaluate the role the Department can play to ensure U.S. interests are fulfilled with regards to Lebanon.

Question. If confirmed, would you support providing additional equipment and training to the Lebanese Armed Forces to help improve stability and security in Lebanon?

Answer. If confirmed, I would be open to such support if and as in line with security assistance priorities in the Middle East and beyond.

Egypt

Question. What is your assessment of the security situation in Egypt and the U.S.-Egypt security relationship?

Answer. My understanding is that Egypt faces several security challenges. Despite the challenges, the United States should expect a better return on its significant investment from our security relationship and encourage Egypt to be more active in addressing instability in its near abroad, particularly Gaza. It is critical that U.S.-Egypt security cooperation advances U.S. interests in the region.

Question. What role does the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) play in the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty? Should the U.S. maintain its military deployment to the MFO? What would be the risks of reducing this commitment?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter carefully.

Question. In your view, should the United States continue to provide defense articles and services purchased by the Egyptian military using U.S. Foreign Military Financing funds?

Answer. Egypt is an important U.S. ally, due to its strategic geography astride the Suez Canal, its role as a leading Arab nation, and the historic ties of our long-standing relationship. U.S. Foreign Military Financing (FMF) plays an important role in strengthening the strategic partnership with Egypt and supporting Egypt's legitimate defense needs. That said, U.S. support to Egypt should be evaluated in the context of our overall defense priorities, especially the pressing threat posed by China and the need to secure our interests in our own hemisphere.

Question. What is your assessment of Egypt's deepening ties with Russia? Where do U.S. and Russian interests converge in Egypt? Where do they diverge?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter carefully.

South Asia

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

Answer. Ensuring terrorism that threatens the U.S. Homeland does not emanate from Afghanistan is an essential national interest. I understand that ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) maintains the intent and capability to strike outside of its traditional area of operations in Afghanistan and is committed to enabling attacks within the United States. I further understand that DOD conducts Operation ENDURING SENTINEL to identify potential attack plotting by terrorist groups in Afghanistan that wish to do the United States harm and to prevent them.

If confirmed, I would work with the Secretary of Defense to assess whether this strategy is effective and how it might be adapted.

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. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would investigate and engage on this important matter.

Question. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to U.S. relations with Pakistan?

Answer. Pakistan remains an important relationship for the United States. I am not aware of any significant changes that are needed at this stage but would be prepared to learn more and engage on this important matter.

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 would prioritize ensuring that the United States is able to protect Americans against threats emanating from Pakistan or elsewhere.

Africa

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

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

Answer. My understanding is that the Department has two primary objectives in the AFRICOM AOR. The first is to degrade terrorist groups' ability to strike the U.S. Homeland and U.S. facilities and persons abroad. The February 1 and February 15, 2025, strikes against ISIS in Somalia are key examples of DOD pursuing this objective under this Administration. The second objective is to counter China's attempts to co-opt African governments in ways that undermine U.S. strategic interests. These seem to be reasonable objectives to me at this stage.

Question. What is your assessment of U.S. counterterrorism strategies in the AFRICOM AOR, particularly those in East Africa, North Africa, and the Sahel? If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you propose to these strategies?

Answer. My understanding is that the current U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the AFRICOM AOR is to disrupt violent extremist organizations and other emerging threats, with continued focus on ISIS and al-Qaeda, especially those groups with the intent and capability of posing a direct threat to the U.S. Homeland or U.S. personnel.

The Department rightly prioritizes working by, with, and through allies and regional partners to disrupt and degrade terrorist threats. If confirmed, I would seek to build on this approach.

Question. What is your assessment of the strategic objectives of Russia and China in Africa? In what areas, if any, are these objectives in conflict with U.S. and partner objectives?

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

Many of these activities are not in line with U.S. and partners' objectives in Africa.

Question. What should be DOD's role and objectives in countering Russian and Chinese activities and objectives in Africa?

Answer. I agree with the broad U.S. objectives specified above and believe DOD's role is largely a supporting one in Africa, with the main line of effort being other departments and agencies as well as activities by allies and partners.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS, COUNTER-TERRORISM, & TRANS-NATIONAL THREATS

Question. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2017, successive NDAAs 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 cultivating partnerships and shaping strategic initiatives and policies in alignment with the national defense objectives to ensure 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 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 the Department oversees and supports special operations forces.

Irregular Warfare

Question. Nation states are becoming more aggressive in challenging U.S. interests through the use of asymmetric means that often do not rise to the threshold of traditional armed conflict, commonly referred to as irregular warfare or "gray zone operations."

What is your understanding of the role and relative importance of irregular warfare in supporting DOD's strategic, operational, and tactical objectives?

Answer. My understanding is that irregular warfare (IW) is critical for the Department's mission to deter adversaries and ensure our Nation's security. IW provides valuable flexible options for countering adversaries, combating terrorism, and stabilizing volatile regions.

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. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

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. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Question. What more do you think DOD should be doing to integrate irregular warfare concepts and forces into our operational planning for major regional contingencies? How can irregular warfare contribute to traditional approaches for great power competition?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Special Operations Authorities

Question. Section 127e of title 10, U.S. Code, authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide support (including training, funding, and equipment) to regular forces, irregular forces, and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations for the purpose of combatting terrorism. Section 127d of title 10, U.S. Code, similarly authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide support to forces or individuals supporting or facilitating irregular warfare operations.

What is your assessment of the national security utility of each of these authorities in the current strategic environment?

Answer. I believe these authorities are very helpful for the United States in bolstering ally and partner capacity and delivering higher “bang for the buck” for Americans.

Question. If confirmed, what criteria would you apply to the evaluation of proposals for the use of each of these authorities, with a view to mitigating the risks associated with the conduct of counterterrorism and irregular warfare activities below the level of traditional armed conflict?

Answer. I would first note that these authorities do not provide DOD with any operational authority, and therefore it is my understanding that DOD does not use these authorities to support partner force operations against a group that DOD has not been granted the authority to conduct operations against itself.

It is my understanding that there is a very deliberate process that the Department uses for approval of any 127d and 127e program that includes collaboration by experts across the department and substantial civilian oversight, and that these processes are carefully defined within policy and U.S. Special Operations Command doctrine to ensure risks are managed and activities do not lead to unmanageable escalation dynamics. If confirmed, I would maintain these rigorous standards for 127d and 127e programs.

Question. If confirmed, how would you seek to ensure that recipients of support under these authorities are appropriately vetted to protect against potential human rights and counterintelligence concerns?

Answer. It is my understanding that all prospective recipients of support under these authorities must be screened prior to receiving any material or financial support, and that recipients undergo a continuous vetting process after their initial screening as well. Screening and vetting are intended to identify and mitigate force protection threats, affiliation to foreign intelligence services or other groups that pose a risk to force or mission and identify individuals whose past and present relationships or conduct are unsuitable for supporting U.S. operations, such as past participation in gross violations of human rights or violations of the law of war. I would continue these measures, if confirmed.

Violent Extremist Organizations

Question. What is your assessment of the threat to U.S. 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. Despite significant and continuous U.S. efforts to degrade Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, both continue to pose a threat to U.S. interests around the globe. My understanding is that the U.S. intelligence community assesses that ISIS poses the greater near-term threat to the United States.

If confirmed, I would ensure that the Department retains an abiding focus on the threats posed by either group or their affiliates and adherents, especially their ability to threaten the U.S. 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. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this very important matter and focus on ensuring U.S. counterterrorism strategy and DOD’s role in it are effective and sustainable.

Question. Should the Department focus principally on terrorist organizations that pose a direct threat to the U.S. Homeland? If so, how would you mitigate risk posed by other terrorist groups that have such intent but currently lack the capability to do so?

Answer. I believe that focusing on countering direct threats to the United States makes sense. Through cooperation with our partners and allies we will ensure emerging terrorist threats are tracked and countered. At the same, it also makes

sense to maintain a set of indications and warning to understand how terrorist threats are evolving so that we are not caught off guard in the future.

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. Information is a critical part of the "battlespace." The United States must be appropriately and effectively postured to act there for clear military advantage purposes.

If confirmed, I would review the matter further and be prepared to engage on it.

Question. In your view, does DOD have sufficient authorities and resources to conduct these operations effectively? If not, what additional authorities and resources would you request, if confirmed?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

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. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

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. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Question. In your view, are DOD's OIE appropriately integrated with other similar U.S. Government organizations and activities?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Question. Do you have suggestions for how to strengthen those relationships and capabilities across the interagency?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ROLE IN ELECTION SECURITY

Question. In September 2019, at the annual National Cybersecurity Summit, then Secretary of Defense Esper noted that "our adversaries will continue to target our democratic processes", the Pentagon had "developed our capabilities and increased our capacity to allow us to detect, locate, and exploit threats in the cyber domain", and that "influence operations are at a scope and scale never before imagined." In that same speech, Secretary Esper declared election security "an enduring mission for the Department of Defense."

What do you see as the Department's continued role in election security?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this important matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Question. Do you agree that there is a continuing threat to our democratic processes from foreign malign influence operations?

Answer. I believe there are clearly foreign actors and adversaries that seek to target the United States and its democratic processes.

Question. Do you envision election security as an enduring mission for the Department? If so, how would OUSD(P) best support the mission of defending our democratic processes from interference by Russia and other foreign adversaries?

Answer. I believe DOD can play an important role in deterring and, as necessary, responding to attempts to subvert our democratic processes. That said, I believe we should be very deliberate on this front, zealously preventing national security resources and capabilities from being used in ways that affect our own domestic processes. The point is to have robust and free speech, and free and fair elections.

Question. Do you assess that DOD actions to date are supporting a whole of government approach to foreign adversaries that seek to interfere in our elections? If not, are there additional policy steps that you believe the Department of Defense should take to enhance deterrence of foreign election interference? How would the actions you list, if any, support whole of government efforts?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

COUNTER THREAT FINANCE

Question. What should be the Department's role in counter-threat finance activities?

Answer. I believe the Department can play an important, albeit supporting, role in counter-threat finance activities.

Question. In your view, should the Department expand its support to other U.S. Government departments and agencies conducting counter threat finance activities? If so, how?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

DEFENSE SECURITY COOPERATION

Question. In your view, what should be the role of the Department of Defense within the interagency on efforts to build the capabilities of foreign security forces?

Answer. My understanding is that the Department approaches national security problem sets with a focus on U.S. military forces. As such, DOD approaches efforts to build the capabilities of foreign security forces in the context of enabling those partners to take on roles and operations that also support U.S. national security objectives. DOD's building partner capacity efforts include significant interagency coordination, but it ultimately rightly focuses on the benefit to U.S. national security interests.

Question. What is your assessment of the current level of coordination between the Department of Defense and Department of State on security cooperation?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Question. In your view, what should be the primary objectives of Department of Defense security sector assistance activities? What changes, if any, would you recommend to the Department's current approach to building the capabilities of foreign security forces?

Answer. The Department should ensure that its security cooperation and assistance activities further national security objectives, either by enabling foreign security forces to work with the United States on operations or by allowing those forces to take on operations while U.S. forces focus on other priorities.

Question. Is the Department of Defense appropriately organized and resourced to execute security sector assistance effectively, and do you believe the OUSD(P) is organized and empowered to fulfill its oversight and resource allocation responsibilities under 10 U.S.C. 382? If not, what changes would you make or direct, if confirmed?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review the matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Question. If confirmed, what would be your relationship with the Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA)? On what issues would you expect to consult with the Director?

Answer. My understanding is that the DSCA is a field activity under the authority, direction, and control of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)). As such, a close relationship between the USD(P) and the Director of DSCA is important to ensure alignment between policy direction and execution, and if confirmed I would anticipate working closely with the DSCA Director to ensure that coherence continues.

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 would explore all options to enhance the Department's ability to restore lethality. I would commit to working with Congress, who would ultimately need to authorize another BRAC, on this issue.

If you are confirmed, and were Congress to authorize another BRAC round, how would you set priorities for infrastructure reduction and consolidation across DOD?

I believe that 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.

MILITARY & CIVILIAN PERSONNEL

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. My view is that military end strength should be based on what is necessary to support the Nation's defense strategy as laid out in the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I would look forward to developing that Strategy with the Secretary's guidance and determining what the appropriate end strength is based on that.

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 would look forward to working with the Secretary in building the next National Defense Strategy, and I would work 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?

Answer. Secretary Hegseth is committed to restoring lethality in our fighting force and supporting President Trump's agenda to build peace through strength. The Reserve components are a vital component of the total force. If confirmed, I would ensure the nature of the Reserve components are considered as a part of the holistic department strategy to achieve peace through strength.

Question. 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. If confirmed, I would 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 would 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 U.S. troop deployments to Iraq and the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, I understand that the military's operational tempo remains high. If confirmed, I would 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 the Department is sending the right forces to accomplish national 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 the 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 would 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 am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this important matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Question. What programs, policies, or tools does the Department need to increase the propensity to serve of today’s youth?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this important matter and be prepared to engage on it.

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. As the Secretary has eloquently laid out, 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. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this important matter and be prepared to engage on it.

Question. Do you believe the Armed Forces recruits and retains a diverse workforce, representative of the nation?

Answer. It is a matter of strength and pride for our Nation that servicemembers come from all walks of life across America to be part of a unified team, and in my view the Department is right to welcome those who meet its high standards. The Secretary has rightly made it clear that those high standards should be the same for all, regardless of race, sex or ethnicity, in keeping with the best traditions of the American military.

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.

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.

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 to continue to help rid the force of this criminal behavior.

Question. If confirmed as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, 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. I commit to learning more, if confirmed, about the authorities that exist and, if necessary, I would work with this body to recommend 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 would work to ensure that our policies, programs, and resources are as strong as possible to eliminate sexual assault and other behaviors that are not only criminal and dangerous but also undermine our servicemembers' ability to perform their missions and undercut cohesion and trust. We must have ready, lethal warfighters who can deploy and fight as a cohesive unit.

Question. In your view, why hasn't the Department been more successful in preventing sexual assaults?

Answer. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would review this important matter and be prepared to engage on it.

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 commu-

nications, 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.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, Federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JONI K. ERNST

INNOVATION COOPERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

1. Senator ERNST. Mr. Colby, for this year's National Defense Authorization Act, I am considering legislation to support the Defense Innovation Unit and the wider Department of Defense (DOD) innovation community's efforts to engage with U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) allies and partners to foster cooperation on efforts related to defense innovation, including the development and acquisition of innovative technologies from CENTCOM allies and partners. Would you commit to working with me to create this legislation?

Mr. COLBY. I do commit to working with Senator Ernst, if confirmed, on this initiative to address this critically important set of issues.

2. Senator ERNST. Mr. Colby, would you commit to support the DOD's efforts to foster defense innovation cooperation with our allies and partners in the CENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR), including Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia?

Mr. COLBY. I do commit to working, if confirmed, to supporting DOD's critical efforts to foster such defense innovation cooperation with our Allies and partners in CENTCOM.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

POLICY DIRECTORATE CONCERNS

3. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, having a number of different policymakers with differing viewpoints in the policy directorate of the Pentagon can foster a healthy intellectual environment, but it is important that those viewpoints generally align with those of the President and the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) that those policymakers serve. As Secretary of Defense Peter Hegseth said in his message to the force on January 25, 2025, "the President gave [DOD] a clear mission: achieve peace through strength." Secretary Hegseth set out to do this in three ways: restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence.

Mr. COLBY. I am concerned that the viewpoints held by Mr. Michael Dimino IV, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, are not in congruence with the SECDEF or the President's strategic outlook—particularly in the part of the world he will be advising you about.

Some of Mr. Dimino's past comments that concern me include:

- In a February 2024 webinar, Mr. Dimino said that “there are no vital or existential U.S. interests” in the Middle East. He went on to say that we are countering Iran only “at the behest of the Israelis and the Saudis.”
- In an article written for the site Responsible Statecraft in January 2024, Mr. Dimino suggested that the United States should solve the problem of Houthis militants attacking shipping in the Red Sea by either “passing the buck to China” (i.e. by asking the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to secure the trade route) or by sending more humanitarian aid to Gaza to entice the Houthis to stop firing on U.S. vessels
- In response to an article by Newsweek in October 2024 about the ballistic missile attack on Israel days before, Mr. Dimino said our Israeli allies are “pushing to change the facts on the ground as much as they can,” and that the attack by over 180 ballistic missiles was “fairly moderate,” given the string of Israeli operations for which it was intended.

The above statements by the primary policymaker in Trump’s Pentagon dealing with the Middle East are not in congruence with President Trump or Secretary Hegseth’s stated goals of “peace through strength” or “reestablishing deterrence”. President Trump designated the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization just days into his Presidency. Mr. Dimino seems to want to reason with the Houthis, or worse yet, let Xi Jinping dominate one of the world’s most important commercial waterways. These statements bow down to the Chinese Communist Party and the Ayatollah at a moment when we need to project strength.

Do you agree with me that Mr. Dimino’s comments cited above do not support President Trump’s stated goal of “peace through strength” and the Secretary of Defense’s goal of “reestablishing deterrence”?

While I cannot, as a nominee, presume to speak for President Trump or his Administration, the above cited comments do not align with my own approach.

4. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, if you agree that Mr. Dimino’s statements run counter to U.S. interests and the President’s goals, then you will recommend he be removed from his position, if confirmed?

Mr. COLBY. As a nominee, I am not in a position to make personnel decisions one way or the other. If confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USDP), I would not be in a position to make unilateral decisions on personnel, even within the organization I oversee. Such appointments are ultimately up to the President and the Secretary of Defense.

That said, I do commit to ensuring, if confirmed, that everyone in the organization I oversee, especially senior political appointees, acts in line with the President’s agenda and comports themselves with appropriate sobriety, integrity, and competence. In the event I determine that an individual or individuals are not meeting that standard, I commit to effectively addressing it with the proper authorities, including the Secretary of Defense.

5. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, in a 2023 report by your think tank, The Marathon Initiative, entitled “Resourcing the Strategy of Denial”, Austin Dahmer, who is now Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities, laid out three separate scenarios to re-prioritize the military services’ task organization given different defense budgets. The three scenarios presented were a “steady state” or currently programmed appropriations environment, a mandated 10 percent topline cut, and a 9.5 percent budget increase across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP).

Under the scenario where current appropriations levels are maintained, Mr. Dahmer suggested the U.S. Army should cut 2x Active Component Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs), 2x National Guard Component SBCTs, 1x Active Component Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), 5x National Guard IBCTs, and 2x National Guard Aviation Brigades. In addition, it would reduce AH-64, H-60, and M-1 upgrades, reduce European Defense Initiative funding, and reduce rotational deployments overseas. This amounts to a total reduction of 12x Active or National Guard BCs across the Army or approximately 50,000 troops.

This level of cutting under a current funding scenario is comparable to the massive force cuts under the Obama administration in 2015 where the Army contemplated cutting between 30,000–40,000 troops during sequestration. While the report demonstrates that a drastic increase in defense spending is overall good for the military and results in less cuts—a viewpoint I share—I am concerned that such drastic cuts to Army manpower are being suggested under a “current spending” scenario. The Army has spent decades trying to avoid another “Task Force Smith”—alluding, of course, to an infamous Army battalion destroyed in the Korean War be-

cause it was undermanned, undertrained, and underequipped—and I am concerned such drastic cuts under current spending would raise that specter again.

Do you believe that cutting 12x BCTs from the United States Army during a period of increased pressure from dictators around the world would be a prudent move if spending levels remain current?

Mr. COLBY. I do not.

As I have argued consistently for many years, I believe the United States Army plays a very important role in a denial defense in the Asia-Pacific. My argument has been and continues to be that the Army should transform to optimally contribute to this priority mission for the Department of Defense and the Joint Force.

For instance, I would respectfully draw your attention to this 2022 speech in which I laid out my perspective on this issue.

AUSA LANPAC Symposium—Panel Discussion: Strategic Environment—Preparedness to Meet Future Challenges,” Association of the United States Army, May 17, 2022, available at: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/843642/ausa-lanpac-symposium-panel-discussion-strategic-environment-preparedness-meet-future-challenges>.

6. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, do you agree that cutting 12x BCTs from the United States Army under current spending levels would go against the President’s stated goals of “peace through strength” and Secretary Hegseth’s goal of “reestablishing deterrence”?

Mr. COLBY. I do.

ALASKA

7. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, 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. COLBY. I do commit to carefully reviewing our Arctic posture, with a special focus on the potential importance of Adak Island and what could be productively done there in line with Department priorities on the Asia-Pacific, protecting the homeland, and the Arctic.

8. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, Alaska is the only U.S. State in the Arctic region. What strategic advantages do you see in having multiple ports in the Aleutians and Western Alaska that can refuel U.S. Navy ships?

Mr. COLBY. I believe Alaska offers immense strategic advantages for the United States, not only in the Arctic but in the North Pacific as well as in providing far greater strategic depth for domain awareness, warning, and homeland defense. Part of these advantages is having multiple ports in the Aleutians and Western Alaska for refueling as well refitting, rearming, other logistics requirements, and strategic depth for a layered defense.

9. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, 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. COLBY. I do not presently have the information to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing this important issue to make recommendations to address the problem and I would welcome engagement with Senator Sullivan and his staff to develop such recommendations.

10. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, 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) acting 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 are located. Will you commit to visiting the State of Alaska to understand the unique capabilities our State brings to deterrence?

Mr. COLBY. I do commit to visiting Alaska, if confirmed.

11. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, last year, DOD released a new Arctic Strategy. While the strategy was a step in the right direction, it took a “monitor and respond” approach to dealing with our adversaries that our force posture and infrastructure are ill-equipped to execute. Will you commit to reviewing the U.S. Arctic strategy during your tenure and revising the “monitor and respond” approach to something more forward-looking and pre-emptive of our adversaries’ advances?

Mr. COLBY. I do commit to reviewing the DOD Arctic Strategy with a more forward-looking and forward-leaning approach in mind.

12. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, President Trump recently said, “We will ensure Alaska gets even more defense investment as we fully rebuild our military, especially as Russia and China are making menacing moves in the Pacific.” Currently the military footprint in my State is absent Navy or Marine Corps units, and the Forces that we do have are relegated to the interior of Alaska and must sortie over a thousands of miles to respond to the constant probing at our Northern Border. Will you commit to evaluating our force posture in the Northern Pacific and, if necessary, reopen the bases at Adak and Galena in order to give our commanders the tools to respond effectively to authoritarian aggression?

Mr. COLBY. I do commit, if confirmed, to carefully reviewing DOD’s force posture in Alaska, including the potential for reopening bases at Adak and Galena, including as part of DOD’s overall review force posture review.

DEFENSE ACQUISITION REFORM

13. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, in my view, one of the most important findings of the report of the Commission on Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) Reform involved how defense budgeting and acquisition have become increasingly hard to execute when the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy—the latter of which you are in charge of producing—do not arrive on time. Furthermore, the National Defense Strategy for 2022 was found to be outdated for the fights we’ve seen in the last few years and the rise of Russia and China as a potential block. If confirmed, will you work with National Security Advisor Mike Waltz to deliver a National Defense Strategy on time that provides a focus for the department as it plans for procurement and training?

Mr. COLBY. I do commit, if confirmed, to delivering in a timely fashion a clear-eyed, realistic, and directive National Defense Strategy, under the Secretary of Defense’s supervision, that appropriately lays out the defense approach and broad actions needed to address the threats to American interests. For a strategy to be useful, it must reflect the realities we face, present a clear and credible path to addressing them, and be sharp and directive. I believe the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) I had the honor of working on under President Trump reflected these attributes, and I fully commit to ensuring that the NDS for President Trump’s second term—in a much more dangerous situation—does as well.

I also commit to working closely, if confirmed, with the National Security Advisor and the National Security Council staff on the National Security Strategy (NSS) to ensure, to the extent I am able, that the NSS also reflects these attributes and in particular appropriately incorporates the defense strategy perspective.

CRITICAL MINERALS, NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT, AND ENERGY

14. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, 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.”

Alaska's energy reserves should be factored into any holistic national defense strategy, whether we are guiding stockpile requirements or oil reserves. Do you commit to taking our country's own naturally occurring energy reserves—including those in Alaska—into account as you develop our National Defense Strategy and outline the ways and means we can use these reserves to our advantage in a peer conflict?

Mr. COLBY. I do.

15. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, 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 are 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. COLBY. I do.

16. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, 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. COLBY. It would.

GOLDEN DOME FOR AMERICA

17. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, 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 U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) 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. COLBY. I do.

BUDGET

18. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, 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 believe that any National Defense Strategy that meets the President's stated goal of "peace through strength" will require us to raise defense spending for high priority projects like shipbuilding, industrial base improvement, Golden Dome, etc. and to what level do you think we need to raise spending (express your answer as a percentage of GDP)?

Mr. COLBY. While I cannot speak for the Administration and Congress on what level of defense spending will be provided, I believe that the United States requires robust additional levels of defense spending to meet the profoundly dangerous situation in which we find ourselves. Such needed additional funding will not remove the need for clear strategic prioritization, hard choices, and far greater effort by Allies, but will enable us to achieve a successful peace through strength policy.

SHIPBUILDING

19. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, the previous Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) conducted a comprehensive review of all naval shipbuilding programs and found significant delays of 1–3 years across all current naval vessel constructions, including the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine. This is despite Columbia being the Navy's top priority since 2013. What do you see as the impacts, particularly to our country's preserved second strike capability, if Columbia is allowed to continue to fail?

Mr. COLBY. The nuclear deterrent is the cornerstone of our defense posture, and the ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) leg is our most survivable part of our Triad. A delay in the arrival of new Columbia-class SSBNs would therefore constitute a severe strategic risk, especially if it resulted in gaps in adequate survivable coverage by our SSBN force.

20. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, the Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS) initiative seeks to advance Australia's submarine capabilities while enhancing the U.S. shipbuilding industrial base with their own investment. What do you see as the role of AUKUS in strengthening the anti-hegemonic coalition in the Western Pacific?

Mr. COLBY. I believe the AUKUS initiative is a promising one, including not only its Pillar I but also Pillar II.

It will be absolutely essential, however, for the U.S. submarine industrial base to achieve much better results for the commendable end goal of AUKUS Pillar I to be realized. The United States cannot afford to weaken its own submarine forces in a period of maximum danger in which there is a real risk of conflict with China in the near to medium-term and in which the U.S. submarine force is already undergoing a "bathtub" due to procurement decisions in the past and deficiencies in our defense industrial base. As this Committee has rightly pointed out, current trends are very worrying.

If confirmed, this issue would receive my special attention to ensure a productive outcome.

21. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, what is your view on expanding the authorities for overseas preventive maintenance on U.S.-based ships in support of strategic requirements?

Mr. COLBY. I understand from news reporting that President Trump may be shortly issuing an executive order to revitalize our shipbuilding industry. I believe this is a critical national priority and would, if confirmed, look to the President's guidance on this topic. Within the bounds of that guidance, I would be receptive to such arrangements, consistent with our strategic requirements and the need for us to revitalize our own indigenous shipbuilding and ship-maintenance capabilities.

22. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, in your view, what role should our allies play in revitalizing American shipbuilding and rebuilding our Navy?

Mr. COLBY. I understand from news reporting that President Trump may be shortly issuing an executive order to revitalize our shipbuilding industry. I believe this is a critical national priority and would, if confirmed, look to the President's guidance on this topic. Within the bounds of that guidance, I would be receptive to such arrangements, consistent with our strategic requirements and the need for us to revitalize our own indigenous shipbuilding and ship-maintenance capabilities.

23. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, the Navy is only currently capable of producing 1.2–1.3 Virginia-class attack submarines, well short of the capacity it would need to supply submarines to Australia on time. What is likely to be the effect to the anti-hegemonic coalition if these submarines are not delivered on time?

Mr. COLBY. Nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) are a vital part of any credible military strategy for a denial defense along the first island chain, and thus of the utmost national importance. The fact that our SSN production remains so low, despite the laudable efforts of this Committee to rectify the problem, constitutes a national emergency. The United States simply must have enough attack submarines available for a denial defense along the first island chain to be feasible. Accordingly, I believe that the United States should be prepared to conduct a national mobilization, consistent with what President Trump has called for for many years, to improve our defense industrial base's ability to produce submarines, their munitions, maintain those submarines, and conduct other key related tasks.

KOREA

24. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, the American military presence on the Korean Peninsula has helped keep the peace there since 1953. For many years, the clearest sign of that commitment is a bottom line presence of 28,500 American troops as well as a robust schedule of combined United States-Republic of Korea (ROK) exercises that ensures we ready to “fight tonight” to maintain the peace. In demonstration of South Korea's own commitment to the alliance, it paid 90 percent of the \$11 billion cost of building a new base for U.S. Forces at Camp Humphries. Do you recognize the value of the U.S.-Korean alliance and the American commitment to our allies in Seoul?

Mr. COLBY. I fully recognize the value of our critical alliance with Seoul. Because I believe our alliance is so important and the threat from North Korea and China so pointed, I believe we must adapt our alliance with South Korea to meet the strategic realities we and Seoul face together. Fortunately, I believe Seoul is a model ally in key respects, including its level of defense spending and effort and its willingness to take on greater responsibility in the alliance relationship. I believe this should allow for a successful adaptation of our critical alliance.

IRANIAN THREAT AND THE RED SEA

25. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, Iran's advancement of its nuclear program, the regime's support for global terrorist proxy networks, and Iranian malign activities directly targeting U.S. interests and allies constitute a top national security threat for the United States. How should the Department of Defense balance an effective response to these threats with the stated policy of the incoming administration of “ending wars,” avoiding further regional escalation, and reducing American military commitments in the Middle East?

Mr. COLBY. As I discussed in my hearing, I believe this is one of the key “pain points” the United States faces today. The simple reality is that President Trump has inherited a depleted military and atrophied defense industrial base, with a formal force structure codified in the 2022 NDS that does not provide for the ability to fight multiple major wars on even roughly concurrent timelines. These are the facts with which any credible, serious defense strategy must grapple.

Doing so does not require or suggest abandoning important regions like the Middle East. To the contrary, the only way for us to sustain our interests in multiple theaters in the light of these daunting circumstances is to be clear-eyed, realistic, and hard-nosed, and thus to prioritize our own efforts, while at the same time enabling and where necessary heavily pressing our Allies to do more. Fortunately, we can already see the outlines of a successful policy along these lines in the opening weeks of the Trump Administration.

If confirmed, this overall problem would occupy my attention as a top priority. In general terms, my approach to meeting the challenge would be to prioritize our scarce military resources in the near-term against the most dangerous and significant threats, above all China and threats against the homeland, while seeking a major national effort to revitalize our defense industrial base consistent with the Administration's efforts to reindustrialize America, obtaining additional resources to restore the Joint Force's readiness, and enabling and pressing Allies to substantially step up their efforts for their own and collective defense. As I said to Senator Rosen in the hearing, I believe this is the only practical way to meet the demands of a world in which multi-theater war is a very real possibility.

This all said, if confirmed I would most welcome engagement with and learning from Senators, their staffs, and others on this daunting and central set of problems.

26. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, how should the United States leverage and strengthen cooperation with our Arab partners in the Middle East to protect America's interests and allies, including Israel, against attacks by Iran and its proxies?

Mr. COLBY. I believe augmentation of our cooperation with our Arab partners is a critical part of denying Iran's regional ambitions and promoting the security of our partners and of our key ally Israel. I believe the Abraham Accords offer a superb basis for this, and I would, if confirmed, seek to help build on this approach to promote collaboration among our Allies and partners in the Middle East. At the same time, I believe we should facilitate the ability of our Middle Eastern partners to build up their own defenses and take more responsibility for their own security and for that of their region.

27. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, what, if any, concessions should the United States make to expand regional defense networks against the Iranian axis?

Mr. COLBY. I do not believe the United States needs to make any concessions to Iran to expand our regional defense networks.

Separately, I believe the United States should be prepared to work more actively and flexibly with our regional Allies and partners, including through finding ways to empower and strengthen them.

28. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, the Houthis, with intelligence from Iranian navy spy ships, have launched dozens of drones and missiles to sink U.S. Navy and commercial ships in the Red Sea. Will you commit to respond and defend our ships from attack, and if necessary, to destroy the assets responsible including Iranian navy warships that are threatening or trying to kill U.S. sailors and marines in the Red Sea?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring U.S. ships are effectively defended from attack, including through having the proper authorities to do so and operating within sensible strategies to ensure they are only placed in harm's way with the ability to robustly and effectively defend themselves. I am also prepared, if confirmed, to review and, as advisable, present options for more effective responses to these attacks than our approach has resulted in to date, including but not limited to striking at Iranian warships.

As a general matter, I believe a cardinal duty of the USDP is to ensure that American forces are placed in harm's way only with a clear plan for success, a reasonable chance of attaining that goal, and the will and means to back that plan up. Sometimes this means greater caution and constraint, but often it means more forward-leaning and decisive actions. The goal should be to protect Americans, including American Service members.

UNITED STATES-ISRAEL SECURITY COOPERATION

29. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, what is your perspective on the nature and terms of United States-Israel security cooperation and American military assistance to Israel given the turmoil in the Middle East?

Mr. COLBY. I believe U.S.-Israel security cooperation is very important and, if confirmed, I commit to support and advance it, including through renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with our key ally Israel.

30. Mr. Colby, do you believe it is in America's interest to expand the United States-Israel security relationship and strengthen Israel's independent defense capabilities?

Mr. COLBY. I do.

31. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, the next 10-year security assistance Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Israel and the United States will take effect at the beginning of 2029 and will be negotiated and signed under the Trump administration. Do you support maintaining or increasing the levels of funding secured in the previous MOU during the Obama administration?

Mr. COLBY. I do support increasing the level of funding in the next MOU with Israel.

32. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, the Office of the U.S. Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority was established under the Republican Bush administration in 2005 and is widely regarded by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Central Command as crucial to preventing terrorist threats against Israelis. What is your view on the U.S. role in ensuring successful security coordination between the IDF and Palestinian security forces to safeguard Israeli lives?

Mr. COLBY. My understanding is that the Office of the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) is a way the Department of Defense assists the Department of State in efforts to support Israel. I do not presently have sufficient information to provide an informed assessment of the Coordinator's role and efficacy, but support efforts along these lines. If confirmed, I would investigate this matter further and would be prepared to provide such an assessment, upon request.

PLANNING FOR SIMULTANEOUS MAJOR CONFLICTS

33. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, during the Reagan administration, the U.S. strategy (and by extension budget and procurement profile) reflected planning for a fight in two major theaters (with the possibility of smaller regional conflicts sometimes referred to as "brush fires"). While you have spent much of your academic focus on what the United States is able to produce and support to "fight tonight", what do you think should be the aspirational goal of the United States in planning for major wars and smaller conflicts?

Mr. COLBY. My focus in my work both in Government and outside has been to optimally position the United States to achieve its goals of peace through strength and the advancement and protection of Americans' interests both today and in the future.

I believe the United States should, with much greater effort by its allies, be able to handle multiple simultaneous conflicts. This is the only prudent planning assumption, especially given the increasingly grave risk of multi-front war with the counter-coalition we face, given the staggering buildup of Chinese military power, Russia's rejuvenated military capacity, the advancing threat of North Korea, Iran's ongoing belligerent activities and nuclear program, and the ongoing threat of terrorism.

In this context, I believe the U.S. priority and focus should be on the most powerful and consequential State among this counter-coalition: China in the Asia-Pacific, while we maintain a strong and secure nuclear deterrent and homeland defense capabilities against multiple potential foes and the abilities to prevent terrorist attacks against America. At the same time, we should work hard to bolster allied capabilities to take more responsibility for their own defense and, wherever possible with this prioritization, we should be prepared to aid in their defense. I believe this is the strategy most consistent with the President's America First and peace through strength policies, as well as common sense.

As an aspirational goal, as the United States resuscitates its defense industrial base and restores the readiness of its forces, the Department of Defense should shape its forces to meet these three goals first and foremost but also to materially contribute, especially in high payoff ways, to concurrently helping to deter and if necessary addressing conflicts alongside better-armed allies in Europe, the Middle East, and the Korean Peninsula.

34. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Colby, do you believe that the DOD's strategy should drive how we spend, how we recruit, how much we procure, and how we train or do you believe that how we are currently resourced and what our industrial base and society can support now should drive strategy? Support your answer with examples.

Mr. COLBY. I believe our national defense strategy should be based on the protection and advancement of Americans' interests. This means the appropriate level of national defense spending should vary depending on the threats to those interests, and today the threats to our interests are clearly rising. As a result, I support robust additional defense spending.

At the same time, as the Vice President rightly pointed out in the hearing, the root of our national defense lies in our economic strength and productivity. America has never been a Sparta, nor is that consistent with our national traditions or values. Rather, at our best we could out-produce our adversaries, with our Detroit Deterrent and Arsenal of Democracy, and out-advance them, with our Manhattan Project and our Second Offset Strategy. Accordingly, even as we raise defense spending, it is even more important to ensure that our Nation has the industrial and economic might to produce rapidly at scale, make and exploit technological advances, and do so at a reasonable cost. This is not where we are today, and this constitutes a major problem.

As a result, if confirmed, I would make a special effort to advocate for revitalizing our industrial and technological base to ensure we get much better "bang for our buck" so that we ensure our defense dollars go as far as possible in an era of greater threats but also, as the President has reminded us, significant debt.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICK SCOTT

AUSTRALIA, THE UNITED KINGDOM, AND THE UNITED STATES

35. Senator SCOTT. Mr. Colby, do you agree with Secretary Hegseth's remarks during his press conference with Australian Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles on February 7, 2025, that AUKUS [Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States trilateral security partnership] enhances the ability of the United States in the subterranean space, and that the President is supportive of AUKUS, and recognizes its importance to the U.S. defense industrial base?

Mr. COLBY. I believe the AUKUS initiative is a promising one, including not only its Pillar I but also Pillar II. A well-armed and well-funded Australian military, including SSNs, is very much in the American interest.

It will be absolutely essential, however, for the U.S. submarine industrial base to achieve much greater results for the commendable end goal of AUKUS Pillar I to be realized. The United States cannot afford to weaken its own submarine forces in a period of maximum danger in which there is a real risk of conflict with China in the near to medium-term and in which the U.S. submarine force is already undergoing a "bathtub" due to procurement decisions in the past and deficiencies in our defense industrial base. As this Committee has rightly pointed out, current trends are very worrying.

If confirmed, this issue would receive my special attention to ensure a productive outcome.

36. Senator SCOTT. Mr. Colby, as you know the United States has received the first contribution from Australia of \$500 million to the U.S. submarine industrial base. Do you support continued investment in the U.S. submarine industrial base?

Mr. COLBY. I am aware and greatly appreciate Australian contributions to the U.S. submarine industrial base. I do support such continued investments.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

HOMELAND DEFENSE

37. Senator BUDD. Mr. Colby, President Trump has taken significant action to keep Americans safe, particularly through the President's Golden Dome initiative. From a policy perspective, what are the next items to accomplish to ensure the defense of our Nation?

Mr. COLBY. I believe the Golden Dome initiative offers an excellent path and framework for dramatically augmenting our homeland defenses in a time in which the missile and other aerial threats to America have grown dramatically. I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed answer as to the best next steps to advance this goal. If confirmed, however, I commit to making this a priority and would welcome discussions with Senator Budd and his staff on this.

CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS PREPAREDNESS

38. Senator BUDD. Mr. Colby, the 2022 National Defense Strategy identifies the threat of chemical and biological warfare and necessitates that the Joint Force be prepared to prevail in a contaminated environment. What is your assessment of the threat that chemical and biological weapons pose to the United States today, particularly from People's Republic of China (PRC), and how do you view the role of the Department in countering these threats?

Mr. COLBY. I believe chemical and biological weapons can pose a very serious threat to the United States, its forces, and our allies. I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed assessment of the PRC threat on this front, but, if confirmed, would make it a point to investigate and to provide an assessment upon request.

The role of DOD is essential and central in deterring and, if necessary, responding to chemical and biological attack.

UNITED STATES-ISRAEL COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS

39. Senator BUDD. Mr. Colby, the United States and Israel have collaborated on a variety of defense programs, including U.S.-Israel Missile Defense, U.S.-Israel Emerging Technology, Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and Counter Tunneling Programs. What is your assessment of these programs and, if confirmed, do you commit to support U.S.-Israel defense programs?

Mr. COLBY. I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed assessment of current U.S.-Israel collaboration. If confirmed, however, I would make it a point to investigate and to provide an assessment upon request.

I do commit to strongly supporting and indeed advancing such collaboration.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR RICHARD BLUMENTHAL

COST VALUE PROPOSITION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD

40. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Colby, in your book “Strategy of Denial”, you recognized three components of the U.S. Armed Forces: “. . . the nuclear arsenal, conventional forces, and the military counterterrorism enterprise.” You went on to say, “The great bulk of U.S. defense effort and resources go to the conventional forces, which are the primary mechanism for American deterrent and defense activities.” The Secretary of Defense’s recent statement of priorities for the 2026 “Budget Relook” included, as the top three priorities, (1) urgently act to revive the warrior ethos, rebuild our military, reestablish deterrence, (2) resource the fighting force we need, and (3) cease unnecessary spending. As your book concludes, the aim of our defense is peace. While at peace, the National Guard provides 20 percent of Joint Force Combat Power with only 4 percent of the Department’s budget. At the same time, the National Guard has demonstrated throughout our history, and continues today, that when called on, they can be employed quickly, effectively, and in some cases, more effectively in the urgent roles requiring combat forces.

Mr. COLBY. Considering the combination of those priorities, what are your thoughts on increasing the proportion of National Guard combat forces related to their Active Duty counterparts (Army and Air Force), recognizing that these three priorities can be, at least in part, addressed by the highly trained, highly ready National Guard Forces that currently provide 20 percent of Joint Force power at 4 percent of the budget?

I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed assessment on the relative proportion of National Guard combat forces related to their Active Duty counterparts. I know, however, that the Army and Air National Guard are critical components of the Total Force that will continue to make meaningful contributions to the defense of our Nation, both at home and abroad.

If confirmed, however, I would work closely with the Secretary and Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness to determine the appropriate proportion of the National Guard as part of the Total Force as we build a new National Defense Strategy to achieve peace through strength.

MODERNIZING THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD—RAND FINDINGS AND TRANSITIONS

41. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Colby, the challenge of transitioning the Air Force’s Reserve Component to newer platforms has been highlighted in recent analysis. In fact, a 2024 RAND study titled “Active and Reserve Component Force Mix Considerations”, commissioned by the Air Force to align itself with the current National Defense Strategy, found the Reserve Component (Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve) found that operating and support costs per aircraft for the Reserve Component is significantly (30–40 percent) less than the Active Component. It also found that the Reserve Component currently retains more experienced personnel than the Active Force and warned that if those seasoned airmen aren’t moved onto fifth-generation platforms, their expertise could be lost. Given this, how will your policies facilitate the Air Guard’s modernization?

Mr. COLBY. I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed assessment on this matter. I do, however, recognize the importance of the Air Guard. If confirmed, I would make it a point to investigate and to provide an assessment upon request.

42. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Colby, for example, as we divest fourth-generation fighters, will you ensure experienced Guard F-16 and A-10 pilots have pathways into F-35s, KC-46 tankers, or other advanced flying platforms so we retain their skills?

Mr. COLBY. I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed assessment on this matter. I do, however, recognize the importance of the Air Guard and retaining experienced pilots. If confirmed, I would make it a point to investigate and to provide an assessment upon request.

43. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Colby, what investments or policy changes (training pipelines, unit conversions, etc.) are needed to concurrently retire legacy aircraft and stand-up new systems in the Guard without a gap in readiness?

Mr. COLBY. I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed assessment on this matter. I do, however, recognize the importance of the Air Guard and ensuring its readiness. If confirmed, I would make it a point to investigate and to provide an assessment upon request.

44. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Colby, how will you address the inherent tension between rapid modernization and the risk of near-term capability shortfalls or pilot attrition during the transition?

Mr. COLBY. I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed assessment on this matter. I do, however, recognize the importance of the Air Guard and ensuring its readiness. If confirmed, I would make it a point to investigate and to provide an assessment upon request.

45. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Colby, studies like the RAND study mentioned above have demonstrated that in garrison, Reserve Component units are far more economical than Active units. In fact, Headquarters Air Force A-5/8 analysis recently yielded an estimated \$511 million across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) by simply swapping ownership of the current KC-135 unit at Fairchild Air Force Base in Washington State from Active to National Guard ownership (from classic to active association). In this case, the National Guard Forces would command, maintain, train and execute mission with many Active Duty airmen still associated utilizing aircraft and facilities at a far reduced cost. This construct further demonstrates the value the Reserve Component can provide to our Nation. If confirmed, would your policies seek to compel examination of similar unit ownership, especially among our Air Force's most modern platforms like KC-46?

Mr. COLBY. I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed assessment on this matter. I do, however, recognize the importance of the Air Guard and ensuring its readiness. If confirmed, I would make it a point to investigate and to provide an assessment upon request.

NATIONAL GUARDS PLACE IN GREATER FORCE

46. Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Colby, one way of viewing the National Guard as a valuable deterrent military asset is by its standing in the Nation, existing in over 2,600 communities every day of every year, 430,000 Americans at home where they serve, working, shopping, with families, representing all of those communities in everyday service, just as it was 250 years ago at the Concord Bridge, in the World Wars of last century, and even the Global War on Terrorism throughout this century. How do you view these unique forces as a deterrent to our foes and a fighting force we need?

Mr. COLBY. I believe the National Guard plays a very important role not only in our military and its warfighting effectiveness but as part of our national fabric and history. Our military is not and has never been a purely professional force but rather has always rested on the ability to call upon the Nation at large. The National Guard represents this critical link.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

CUTS TO FOREIGN AID AND IMPACT ON THE INDO-PACIFIC

47. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Colby, I am very concerned about how this Administration's nearly blanket freeze on foreign aid and dismantling of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will affect our standing with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. Our national defense strategy correctly identifies the important asymmetric advantage our allies and partners provide us to deter Chinese aggression and maintain stability in the region. Do you agree that freezing foreign aid funding and cutting personnel endangers our strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific?

Mr. COLBY. I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed assessment on the Administration's reform of foreign aid, but support efforts to ensure that our foreign aid is tightly and clearly tied to advancing Americans' interests.

48. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Colby, China is eager to fill the void we are leaving. Do we risk ceding U.S. influence in the region, including our position as "partner of choice", by abandoning our allies and foreign aid commitments?

Mr. COLBY. I do not believe we are abandoning our allies. As with so much in our foreign policy, I believe it is important that we re-baseline and update our international engagements precisely to make sure they are in line with Americans' concrete interests and thus sustainable. I believe we will be in a better position to compete with China on this revamped, refreshed basis rather than simply pursuing many of the policies we had pursued in the past.

REBUILDING THE DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

49. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Colby, in your advance policy answers, you broadly identify the critical national security importance of restoring our defense industrial base to build more submarines, ships, and critical munitions. Unfortunately, you provide few specifics—please identify three policy initiatives or plans you intend to implement to address this issue.

Mr. COLBY. As I have not been in Government nor had access to the best information on this vital topic, I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, however, I would make it a special priority to help drive the revamping of our defense industrial base and would be prepared, upon request, to provide a list of such initiatives once I have had the chance to be properly briefed and informed.

COMMITMENT TO AUSTRALIA, THE UNITED KINGDOM, AND THE UNITED STATES PARTNERSHIP

50. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Colby, you previously had significant reservations about the AUKUS partnership. More recently, your views seemed to have changed, which is reflected in your response to questions from the Committee where you called AUKUS “a model of the type of cooperation we need to meet the challenges of the 21st century.” The AUKUS partnership is extremely important to deterrence in the Indo-Pacific—I'd like you to clarify for this Committee where you stand on this issue.

Mr. COLBY. I believe the AUKUS initiative is a promising one, including not only its Pillar I but also Pillar II. A well-armed and well-funded Australian military, including SSNs, is very much in the American interest.

It will be absolutely essential, however, for the U.S. submarine industrial base to achieve much greater results for the commendable end goal of AUKUS Pillar I to be realized. The United States cannot afford to weaken its own submarine forces in a period of maximum danger in which there is a real risk of conflict with China in the near to medium-term and in which the U.S. submarine force is already undergoing a “bathtub” due to procurement decisions in the past and deficiencies in our defense industrial base. As this Committee has rightly pointed out, current trends are very worrying.

If confirmed, this issue would receive my special attention to ensure a productive outcome.

Allow me to stress that my focus here is on ensuring that we—Americans and our allies—have the strongest, most realistic deterrent force ready both in the long-term but also, crucially, in the nearer and medium-term. China might move against Taiwan in the near term, as Secretary Rubio rightly said in his confirmation hearing. America simply must have the right forces in the right place at the right time to deter and, if necessary, address such a contingency. I believe that is the only responsible policy, lest our servicemen and women be put in harm's way without the best possible weaponry. I believe putting Americans first requires that we give our servicemen and women the absolutely best armaments—ideally to deter war but, if necessary, to enable them to prevail in one at as low a cost as possible.

SHORT AND LONG-TERM READINESS

51. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Colby, one of your duties as Under Secretary for Policy (USD(P)) will be developing planning scenarios to evaluate the Joint Force's capabilities and readiness, which will include conducting assessments of progress and balancing the need for near-and longer-term warfighting readiness goals. How do you plan to address the difficult problem of ensuring our Forces are prepared now for a potential major war while also confronting the need to invest and prepare for a future fight?

Mr. COLBY. This is one of the key strategic tensions that I would seek to address, if confirmed, in the National Defense Strategy and other key strategic documents. The simple fact is that we are no longer in a period of safety but rather one of great danger. Accordingly, our forces must be ready both now and over the longer-term. This poses a serious strategic challenge given the atrophying of our defense indus-

trial base and the historically low readiness of our armed forces that President Trump has inherited.

MISSILE DEFENSE EXECUTIVE ORDER ASSESSMENT

52. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Colby, the President's recent missile defense Executive Order (EO) tasks U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) with providing "an updated assessment of the strategic missile threat to the Homeland." You will also have a part in implementing the President's EO, if confirmed. I remain concerned about the viability of the DOD's strategy to defend Hawaii from missile threats. Will you commit to include Hawaii in any updates to the United States' missile defense system?

Mr. COLBY. I do so commit.

CIVILIAN PERSONNEL CUTS

53. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Colby, if confirmed as Under Secretary for Policy, you will oversee a component with a high concentration of civilian personnel. This Administration is targeting civilian probationary employees, many of whom fill critical positions in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Policy. DOD has not conducted the required analysis to assess the readiness impact of these cuts. What specific policies or oversight will you implement to ensure that critical personnel are not dismissed arbitrarily?

Mr. COLBY. I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed assessment on the Administration's workforce optimization initiatives. If confirmed, I would work to ensure that our workforce optimization initiatives maximize the Department's efficiency and effectiveness considering the fiscal constraints our Nation faces.

54. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Colby, given that many probationary employees often represent the next generation of DOD leadership, how will you ensure these cuts do not disproportionately undermine Policy's ability to retain and develop young talent?

Mr. COLBY. I have not had the briefings or access to provide an informed assessment of the Administration's workforce optimization initiatives. If confirmed, I would work to ensure that our workforce optimization initiatives are designed to maximize the Department's efficiency and effectiveness considering the fiscal constraints our Nation faces.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

ETHICS

55. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, please provide a list of all your clients at American Global Strategies, Gerson Lehrman Group, TechSource, Telemus Group, Renaissance Macro, Virtu, Capstone DC, and Global Precision Research LLC, and the years during which you consulted for them.

Mr. COLBY. I take my ethics and disclosure requirements seriously. Accordingly, please refer to the Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE 278e) dated January 15, 2025 that I filed in conjunction with my nomination as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

56. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed, will you commit to recuse from all particular matters involving your former clients and employers for 4 years while at DOD?

Mr. COLBY. My ethics agreement and existing laws and policies would 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, and for 1 year for matters involving a former client, unless I am first authorized to participate by the appropriate ethics official. If confirmed, I would ensure that I have a robust screening process in place to help implement these recusals. I can pledge to you that I would be mindful of not only the legal requirements that govern my conduct, but also of the need to ensure that the public has no good reason to question my impartiality, and I would consult with the Department's ethics officials should such issues arise.

57. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed, will you commit to divest from investments in any companies with DOD contracts?

Mr. COLBY. My ethics agreement signed on January 31, 2025, sets forth my divestiture requirements, if confirmed. I would, if confirmed, follow my obligations scrupulously.

58. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, you have between \$100,000 and \$250,000 invested in the communications technology company Syniverse Technologies, Inc., which is positioning itself to increase its work with Federal agencies. If Syniverse has or seeks a DOD contract, will you divest from your Syniverse holdings?

Please see my response to the previous question.

59. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed, will you commit to not seeking any employment with or compensation from a defense contractor, including through serving on a board, as a consultant, or as a lobbyist, for 4 years after leaving DOD?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I would abide by the extensive Federal post-government employment ethics and procurement integrity laws, 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. If confirmed, I commit to carrying out the responsibilities of my office and I would seek any post-government employment only in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

60. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed, will you commit to not engaging in any lobbying activities, including “behind-the-scenes” shadow lobbying, focused on DOD or any of its components for 4 years after leaving DOD?

Please see my response to the previous question.

61. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, during your nomination process, did anyone on the Trump campaign, transition team, or other closely related entity approach you about your loyalty to President Trump?

Mr. COLBY. I am committed to maintaining the confidentiality of my conversations with you, other elected officials, and other policymakers and their advisors absent legal obligations to the contrary.

62. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you were approached about your loyalty to President Trump, did you sign a loyalty pledge or other similar oath? If so, please provide a copy of the text of that pledge or oath.

Mr. COLBY. I am committed to maintaining the confidentiality of my conversations with you, other elected officials, and other policymakers and their advisors absent legal obligations to the contrary.

63. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you were approached about your loyalty to President Trump, did you make any verbal representations of loyalty? If so, please describe this representation.

Mr. COLBY. I am committed to maintaining the confidentiality of my conversations with you, other elected officials, and other policymakers and their advisors absent legal obligations to the contrary.

64. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, in November 2024, the New York Times and other news outlets reported that Boris Epshteyn, a top adviser to President 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. COLBY. No.

65. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you did discuss the possibility of joining the Administration with Mr. Epshteyn, did Mr. Epshteyn seek payment from you for promoting your candidacy for a position within the Administration?

Mr. COLBY. No.

66. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, at any time, did lawyers for President Trump or members of President Trump’s team approach you regarding Mr. Epshteyn and the allegations cited above? If so, please explain the information that they provided you, including copies of documents, what was discussed during any calls, and any other information pertaining to this interaction.

Mr. COLBY. No.

67. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what is your view of former Pentagon officials becoming defense industry lobbyists?

Mr. COLBY. It is important that the public maintains trust in the Department of Defense and senior leaders. I commit to abiding by the robust set of existing ethics rules and obligations to which I would be subject, if confirmed. These are designed to protect the public interest and public confidence in government.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT AND TRANSPARENCY

68. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what is your understanding of the role of the Department of Defense Inspector General?

Mr. COLBY. My understanding is that the role of the Inspector General is to advise the Secretary of Defense regarding waste, fraud, and abuse at the Department of Defense.

69. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, will you ensure your staff complies with any Inspector General deadlines established for requested communications, providing witnesses, providing documents, and that those witnesses will be protected from reprisal for their testimony?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I would ensure both compliance with Office of the Inspector General deadlines and protection of witnesses against retaliation for testimony.

70. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are not able to comply with any Inspector General requests and deadlines, will you notify the Republican and Democratic members of the committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I would work with the Office of the Inspector General to comply with requests in a timely manner. I would defer to that office to keep Congress updated regarding its reviews.

71. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, will you commit to refusing to follow illegal orders from any individual, including the President?

Mr. COLBY. I do not believe that the President or Secretary of Defense would issue an unlawful order.

If confirmed, I would follow the law and the Constitution of the United States.

72. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, will you commit to testify before Congress if you are called upon by Congress to provide a deposition or if you are issued a subpoena?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I would work to accommodate congressional oversight—to include depositions if subpoenaed.

73. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, will you commit to providing information or documents to Congress if you are requested to do so or issued a subpoena?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I would work to accommodate congressional oversight—to include providing information and documents when requested by Congress or when subpoenaed.

74. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, will you commit to following current DOD precedent for responding to information requests, briefings, and other inquiries from Congress, including the Senate and House Armed Services Committees and their minority members?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I would work to accommodate congressional oversight—to include information requests, briefings, and other inquiries by members of the Committee on Armed Services of both chambers of Congress.

75. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if confirmed, will you commit to posting your official calendar monthly?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I commit to complying with Freedom of Information Act, which covers all agency records to include my official calendar.

76. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you think DOD has an over classification problem? If so, can you commit to providing this committee an estimate of the number or percentage of DOD documents that are overclassified?

Mr. COLBY. Properly classifying sensitive information is essential for national security. That said, overclassification is a real problem. Information that does not meet the standards for classification should not be classified. If confirmed, I am committed to supporting the Secretary in ensuring proper classification and would

work with my intelligence community counterparts to modernize requirements for safeguarding national security information and releasing information as promptly as possible that does not meet these criteria.

77. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, to the best of your knowledge, are DOD components identifying records for proactive posting in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act? If not, how would you ensure that they do so to comply with public records law?

Mr. COLBY. I am not in a position to offer an informed assessment of DOD's compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

If confirmed, I would ensure compliance within OSD(P) with the Freedom of Information Act.

78. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if confirmed, do you think the DOD should pursue strategic technology to support automated declassification?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I would support leveraging technological solutions (to include artificial intelligence) to increase the speed, accuracy, and consistency of declassification reviews.

PROJECT 2025

79. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, have you discussed Project 2025 with any officials associated with the Trump campaign, the Trump transition team, or other members of the Trump administration? If so, please explain what you discussed, when you discussed it, and with whom you discussed it.

Mr. COLBY. I am committed to maintaining the confidentiality of my conversations with you, other elected officials, and other policymakers and their advisors absent legal obligations to the contrary.

80. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, have you discussed Project 2025 with any officials associated with the Heritage Foundation? If so, please explain what you discussed, when you discussed it, and with whom you discussed it.

Mr. COLBY. I am committed to maintaining the confidentiality of my conversations with you, other elected officials, and other policymakers and their advisors absent legal obligations to the contrary.

FOREIGN INFLUENCE

81. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, your 278 form notes that you received an honorarium to speak for Japanese experts and business people in 2024. What was the subject of your remarks? Please provide a copy if available.

Mr. COLBY. The topic of my remarks was the geopolitical situation, especially in Asia, as part of a Bank of America Asia conference. I spoke extemporaneously but the remarks were consistent with my available public commentary.

82. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, your 278 form notes that you received an honorarium to speak to a Finnish business delegation in 2024. What was the subject of your remarks? Please provide a copy if available.

Mr. COLBY. The topic of my remarks was the geopolitical situation, especially relevant to Europe and Finland, to a visiting Finnish delegation of businesspeople. I spoke extemporaneously but the remarks were consistent with my available public commentary.

83. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, your 278 form notes that you received an honorarium to speak to the American Chamber of Commerce in Australia. What was the subject of your remarks? Please provide a copy if available.

Mr. COLBY. The topic of my remarks was the geopolitical situation, especially in the Asia-Pacific, to the American Chamber of Commerce in Australia (virtually). I spoke extemporaneously but the remarks were consistent with my available public commentary.

84. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, your 278 form notes that you received an honorarium from Sibelco to give a speech at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. What was the subject of your remarks? Please provide a copy if available.

Mr. COLBY. The topic of my remarks was the geopolitical situation, especially relevant to Europe, to a university audience. I spoke extemporaneously but the remarks were consistent with my available public commentary.

85. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, your 278 form notes that you received an honorarium from to speak to a Canadian delegation organized by the Business Council of Canada. What was the subject of your remarks? Please provide a copy if available.

Mr. COLBY. The topic of my remarks was the geopolitical situation, especially relevant to Canada, to a visiting Canadian delegation of businesspeople. I spoke extemporaneously but the remarks were consistent with my available public commentary.

86. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, have you received any additional payments from a foreign government or entity controlled by a foreign government within the past 5 years?

Mr. COLBY. Please refer to the Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE Form 278e) dated January 15, 2025 that I filed in connection with my nomination as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. That report provides responsive information from January 1, 2023 to January 15, 2025.

87. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, have you communicated with any additional foreign governments or entities controlled by foreign governments within the past 5 years?

Mr. COLBY. Yes, I have had extensive contacts with foreign governments and entities as part of my work in the foreign policy field.

88. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, please disclose any communications or payments you have had with representatives of any foreign government or entity controlled by a foreign government within the past 5 years and describe the nature of the communication.

Mr. COLBY. Please refer to the Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE Form 278e) dated January 15, 2025 that I filed in connection with my nomination as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. That report provides responsive information from January 1, 2023 to January 15, 2025.

I note that I also disclosed relevant such engagements as part of both my background investigation process.

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT

89. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, the most recent DOD statistics found that about 29,000 Active Duty troops—which accounts for 6.8 percent of female servicemembers and 1.3 percent of male servicemembers—experienced unwanted sexual contact in 2023. A Brown University study estimates that the actual rates are two to four times higher. How do you plan to address and reduce sexual assault and sexual harassment in DOD?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I would work hard in concert with other responsible officials to address and reduce sexual assault and harassment in DOD.

90. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, how do you plan to support and protect servicemembers, civilians, grantees, and contractors who come forward with reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I would work hard in concert with other responsible officials to address and reduce sexual assault and harassment in DOD, including to support and protect those who come forward with such reports.

AGREEMENTS

91. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, have you, in any professional or personal capacity, signed or agreed to sign a non-disclosure agreement, confidentiality agreement, confidential disclosure agreement, proprietary information agreement, non-disparagement agreement, and/or secrecy agreement and for what reasons did you do so?

Mr. COLBY. As is standard practice for many businesses and organizations, I have signed agreements and contracts with employers and other organizations with which I have engaged. All such engagements have been in accordance with my legal and ethical obligations.

I have disclosed covered engagements as part of my OGE-278e and background investigation processes.

92. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, 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. COLBY. As is standard practice for many businesses and organizations, I have signed agreements and contracts with employers and other organizations with

which I have engaged. All such engagements have been in accordance with my legal and ethical obligations.

I have disclosed covered engagements as part of my OGE-278e and background investigation processes.

93. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, 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. COLBY. As is standard practice for many businesses and organizations, I have signed agreements and contracts with employers and other organizations with which I have engaged. All such engagements have been in accordance with my legal and ethical obligations.

I have disclosed covered engagements as part of my OGE-278e and background investigation processes.

RETALIATION AND PROTECTING WHISTLEBLOWERS

94. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, 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. COLBY. Yes. I believe that persons who report allegations of wrongdoing should be protected from retaliation.

95. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, have you ever retaliated 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. COLBY. No, I have not.

96. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, will you commit to protecting whistleblowers and how will you do so?

Mr. COLBY. I do. If confirmed, I would ensure that the Department of Defense provides all the protections to which whistleblowers are entitled under law and policy.

DOMESTIC DEPLOYMENTS OF U.S. MILITARY

97. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, in which circumstances do you believe that the Insurrection Act should be used?

Mr. COLBY. My understanding is that the authority to invoke the Insurrection Act is vested in the President, and the Act identifies the criteria under which the President may invoke the Act. These are the circumstances in which I believe it would be appropriate to invoke the Act.

98. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you believe that the Insurrection Act should be used only as a "last resort"?

Mr. COLBY. My belief is that invocation of the Insurrection Act should not be undertaken lightly, but rather made only in suitably severe circumstances.

99. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you believe that military forces should be deployed to respond to civil unrest only in situations where State and local authorities are overwhelmed?

Mr. COLBY. My understanding is that, as specified in law and borne out by decades of practice, the President may invoke the Insurrection Act upon the request of a state; when State or local law enforcement are unable, fail, or refuse to protect certain rights; or where conditions otherwise make it impracticable to enforce the law.

100. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you believe that the parties best positioned to determine whether State and local authorities are overwhelmed are those authorities? If not, why not?

Mr. COLBY. My understanding is that, under the law, the ultimate responsibility for invoking the Insurrection Act rests with the President. Needless to say, I believe the views of relevant State and local authorities should receive careful and serious consideration in any such determination.

101. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if confirmed, would you support using the military for immigration enforcement, including for mass deportations, despite the military's lack of relevant training and the harm it would almost certainly do to military readiness?

Mr. COLBY. I believe there is no more solemn responsibility than protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the United States along our national borders. The protection of a nation's territorial integrity and national boundaries is paramount for its security.

The Armed Forces of the United States have played a long and well-established role in securing our borders against threats of invasion, against unlawful forays by foreign nationals into the United States, and against other transnational criminal activities that violate our laws and threaten the peace, harmony, and tranquility of the Nation. These threats have taken a variety of forms over our Nation's history, but the Armed Forces have consistently played an integral role in protecting the sovereignty of the United States.

Threats against our Nation's sovereignty continue today, and it is essential that the Armed Forces staunchly continue to participate in the defense of our territorial integrity and sovereignty. The President has declared that a National Emergency currently exists along the southern border of the United States. Unchecked unlawful mass migration and the unimpeded flow of opiates across our borders continue to endanger the safety and security of the American people and encourage further lawlessness.

In light of this, I support the use of the armed forces to assist in sealing the borders and maintaining the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of the United States.

In doing so, I believe it is essential that the Department conduct these efforts in ways that are consistent with other critical missions of the Armed Forces, especially deterring China, sustaining the nuclear deterrent, and preventing terrorist attacks.

IMPOUNDMENT CONTROL ACT

102. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, on January 27, 2025, President Trump's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memo calling for all Federal financial assistance programs (excluding "assistance provided directly to individuals") to be suspended. Do you agree with OMB's decision to issue this memo?

Mr. COLBY. I support the President's efforts to streamline the Federal Government and ensure that it is carrying out Federal programs in an efficient and economical manner. This is vital given the fiscal constraints our country is facing that the President has pointed out, and thus to making our national security policies and organizations sustainably effective.

That said, I am not aware of how this memorandum has been interpreted and applied among the relevant executive branch agencies, including DOD. Therefore, I am not in a position to provide an informed assessment of the matter. If confirmed, however, I would look forward to learning more and helping to facilitate solutions that reflect the President's and the Secretary of Defense's priorities and are consistent with the law.

103. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you believe that the Secretary of Defense or the Under Secretary of Policy has the legal authority to block the disbursement of funds appropriated by Congress?

Mr. COLBY. I fully acknowledge and respect Congress' constitutional role in appropriating funds to be carried out by the executive branch for designated purposes.

I commit, if confirmed, to executing my responsibilities consistent with the Constitution and the law. I would ensure that my actions and advice to the Secretary of Defense on this matter are informed by the Administration's legal positions and advice from the Department's General Counsel's office.

104. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what is your understanding of the Impoundment Control Act?

Mr. COLBY. My understanding is that Congress passed the Impoundment Control Act in 1974. This Act provides a framework for handling circumstances in which the President seeks to defer or cancel execution of appropriated funds.

I commit, if confirmed, to executing my responsibilities consistent with the Constitution and the law on this matter as on all others. I would ensure that my actions and advice to the Secretary of Defense on this matter are informed by the Administration's legal positions and advice from the Department's General Counsel's office.

105. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you commit to following the Impoundment Control Act?

Mr. COLBY. I commit, if confirmed, to executing my responsibilities consistent with the Constitution and the law on this matter as on all others. I would ensure that my actions and advice to the Secretary of Defense on this matter are informed by the Administration's legal positions and advice from the Department's General Counsel's office.

106. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you commit to notifying the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, including the majority and minority, if you are asked not to follow the Impoundment Control Act or not to expend the money that Congress appropriates or authorizes?

Mr. COLBY. I commit, if confirmed, to executing my responsibilities consistent with the Constitution and the law on this matter as on all others. I would ensure that my actions and advice to the Secretary of Defense on this matter are informed by the Administration's legal positions and advice from the Department's General Counsel's office.

107. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, the Constitution's Spending Clause (Art. I, § 8, cl. 1) and Appropriations Clause (Art. I, § 9, cl. 7) give Congress, not the Executive, power of the purse. The Supreme Court has unanimously upheld this power. Do you believe that impoundments are constitutional?

Mr. COLBY. I commit, if confirmed, to executing my responsibilities consistent with the Constitution and the law on this matter as on all others. I would ensure that my actions and advice to the Secretary of Defense on this matter are informed by the Administration's legal positions and advice from the Department's General Counsel's office.

108. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, the funding levels in appropriations bills passed into law are not targets or ceilings; instead, they are amounts the executive branch must spend, unless stated otherwise. Congress could—if it wanted the President to have discretion—write those amounts as ceilings. Do you agree?

Mr. COLBY. I commit, if confirmed, to executing my responsibilities consistent with the Constitution and the law on this matter as on all others. I would ensure that my actions and advice to the Secretary of Defense on this matter are informed by the Administration's legal positions and advice from the Department's General Counsel's office.

109. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what is your understanding of the requirements for DOD to obligate funding that Congress authorizes and appropriates, in accordance with the time period that Congress deems it to do so?

Mr. COLBY. I commit, if confirmed, to executing my responsibilities consistent with the Constitution and the law on this matter as on all others. I would ensure that my actions and advice to the Secretary of Defense on this matter are informed by the Administration's legal positions and advice from the Department's General Counsel's office.

110. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you commit to expending the money that Congress appropriates and authorizes?

Mr. COLBY. I commit, if confirmed, to executing my responsibilities consistent with the Constitution and the law on this matter as on all others. I would ensure that my actions and advice to the Secretary of Defense on this matter are informed by the Administration's legal positions and advice from the Department's General Counsel's office.

111. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you commit to following and implementing the annual National Defense Authorization Act passed into law?

Mr. COLBY. I commit, if confirmed, to executing my responsibilities consistent with the Constitution and the law, including the National Defense Authorization Act.

CIVILIAN HARM

112. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, 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. COLBY. I do.

113. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what is your understanding of title 10 U.S.C. section 184, which established the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence?

Mr. COLBY. I understand that section 184 requires DOD to operate the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence as a focal point for matters relating to civilian harm, spells out its purpose and use, and requires an annual report.

114. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, 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 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 moral injury and psychological trauma that too often comes with deadly mistakes. The Civilian Protection Center of Excellence (CPCOE), which provides direct support to operational combatant commands on civilian harm issues, has been enshrined in U.S. law via the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023. If confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, will you commit to continued DOD leadership on civilian harm issues, including housing and resourcing the CPCOE?

Mr. COLBY. As I discussed in the hearing, I believe it is both morally right and in the U.S. national interest to reduce civilian harm consistent with deterrence and our military effectiveness. Accordingly, I do commit, if confirmed, to working to reduce civilian harm wherever possible, consistent with the demands of deterrence and military effectiveness.

115. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what do you understand to be your roles and responsibilities regarding civilian harm mitigation and response?

Mr. COLBY. I believe the USDP can play an important role in driving policy and highlighting the importance of this set of issues, in consultation and collaboration with other senior Departmental leaders.

116. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what do you understand to be the importance of mitigating civilian harm in military operations?

Mr. COLBY. I believe it is both morally right and in the U.S. national interest to reduce civilian harm consistent with deterrence, our military effectiveness, and the rapid and successful conclusion of our Nation's wars. It is consistent with our national values and traditions to conduct wars in as just a fashion as possible. Moreover, from a strategic point of view, reducing civilian harm is, as a general matter, likely to serve our national objectives by limiting hostility to our efforts and generating public support for them, both at home and abroad.

117. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed, will you commit to supporting and protecting the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence?

Mr. COLBY. I am not currently in a position to provide an informed assessment on the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence. That said, if confirmed, I commit to reviewing this office and its important work, with a goal of ensuring that the perspective I laid out above is effectively represented.

118. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, according to press reports, the Department of Defense is taking steps to gut operations that are focused on reducing civilian harm through the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response (CHMR). This includes instructing the CPCOE leadership “that the Pentagon was moving forward with plans to halt all civilian harm mitigation work, including winding down the center, rescinding Biden administration directives and firing or reassigning nearly 170 personnel who advise military leaders on limiting noncombatant casualties.” Do you support these efforts?

Mr. COLBY. I am not aware of any such efforts nor do I have specific information about them. Accordingly, I am not in a position to comment on any such efforts.

119. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed, will you commit to reversing the Administration's efforts to dismantle and halt civilian harm mitigation work?

Mr. COLBY. I am not aware of any such efforts nor do I have specific information about them. Accordingly, I am not in a position to comment on any such efforts.

120. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed, how will you ensure that DOD minimizes civilian harm in U.S. military and joint operations, including if the

Administration's efforts to dismantle and halt civilian harm mitigation are not stopped or reversed?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I would in my own counsel and policy advocacy promote the reduction of civilian harm consistent with deterrence and military effectiveness and success, would encourage others to advocate along similar lines, and would ensure that such perspectives had an institutional basis to be effective in presenting them.

121. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence is moved out of the Army, how will you oversee the Army's compliance with title 10 U.S.C. section 184 and the Civilian Harm Mitigation Response and Action Plan (CHMR-AP)?

Mr. COLBY. I am not privy to any Department of Defense plans for realigning the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence (CPCoE), but my understanding of Section 184 is that it requires the Secretary of Defense to operate the CPCoE but does not require that the CPCoE be organized under the Department of the Army. I also understand that there is a CHMR Steering Committee that provides executive leadership, oversight, and guidance on Department-wide CHMR efforts. That Steering Committee is co-chaired by the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, the Undersecretary of Defense for the Comptroller, and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the other co-chairs on these issues.

122. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, how will you prevent and mitigate civilian harm?

Mr. COLBY. If confirmed, I would promote the reduction of civilian harm consistent with deterrence and military effectiveness and success, would encourage others to advocate along similar lines, and would ensure that such perspectives had an institutional basis to be effective in presenting them.

123. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, will you commit to supporting and implementing the CHMR-AP?

Mr. COLBY. I am not in a position to provide an informed assessment of the CHMR-AP, but commit, if confirmed, in my own counsel and policy advocacy to promote the reduction of civilian harm consistent with deterrence and military effectiveness and success, to encourage others to advocate along similar lines, and to ensure that such perspectives have an institutional basis to be effective in presenting them.

124. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, 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. COLBY. American security rests on the ability and will to use military power. This is a simple fact in a dangerous world.

At the same time, the experience of the last generation has reinforced the truth that such employment can also create more problems and dangers than it solves. One important way this can happen is with civilian deaths caused by U.S. military operations. Therefore, while it is essential that our military be able to act first and foremost with the goal of Americans' security and thus of effectiveness, it is likewise essential that such actions be correlated with a clear, reasonable, and defensible goal, and that they be conducted in ways that reduce the harm to innocent civilians to the degree possible and consistent with those criteria.

ACQUISITION REFORM AND THE DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

125. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you believe giving the Services access to the technical data rights needed to repair their own equipment could advance military readiness?

Mr. COLBY. In my opinion, the Department must procure the necessary data and associated rights to allow for the repair of its own equipment. If confirmed, I would work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to better understand and improve the Department's internal policies regarding the acquisition of technical data rights and the impact on readiness.

126. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you believe giving the Services access to the technical data rights needed to repair their own equipment could help reduce the military's repair and sustainment costs?

Mr. COLBY. I do believe it could have this effect. Therefore, if confirmed, I would work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to better understand and improve the Department's internal policies regarding the acquisition of technical data rights, accompanying license rights, and the impact on repair and sustainment costs.

127. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, 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. COLBY. I do not presently have enough information to provide an informed assessment on this important matter. If confirmed, I would make a point to investigate it and would be prepared to provide recommendations upon request.

128. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed as USD(P), will you commit to including clauses to ensure DOD has fair and reasonable access to applicable technical in acquisition contracts that DOD enters into?

Mr. COLBY. I share this perspective. Accordingly, if confirmed, I would work with my colleagues in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to better understand and improve the Department's current policies and practices regarding right-to-repair and technical data rights within acquisition contracts. I would advocate for such an approach as the Department explores how best to leverage rights-to-repair and technical data rights in acquisition contracts to enhance competition, control costs, and foster innovation within the defense industrial base.

129. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed as USD(P), will you commit to ensuring contractors abide by contractual obligations to deliver or allow DOD to access technical data rights?

Mr. COLBY. Yes. If confirmed, I would support the Department's acquisition officials in their efforts to receive the contractually required data and license rights associated with that data and, when appropriate, any enforcement actions they must take.

130. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed as USD(P), will you commit to assessing and reporting the cost of not having right-to-repair/technical data rights for the military's equipment, the results of which assessment you would make public for review by Congress and the Department of Government Efficiency?

Mr. COLBY. Any such assessment would be in the purview of the USD(A&S). If confirmed, I would support efforts by the Department to review the cost and readiness impacts of not having rights-to-repair and technical data rights.

131. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what do you see as the role of competition in strengthening the defense industrial base?

Mr. COLBY. I believe competition is essential in strengthening our defense industrial base. We need a vigorous, healthy, and active competitive landscape to produce the right weaponry and other capabilities at scale and rapidly, not only for ourselves but for our allies and partners. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to encourage the Department to leverage its authorities, tools, programs, and initiatives to foster a more competitive defense industrial base.

132. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what do you understand DOD's role to be in analyzing proposed acquisitions and mergers?

Mr. COLBY. My understanding is that the Department has an important role in ensuring that the defense industrial base is resilient, capable, and competitive. As I understand it, the Department supports the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and Department of Justice (DOJ) in evaluating defense-related mergers and acquisitions.

I believe the Department should actively press its case for a more competitive defense industrial base, and, if confirmed, would personally advocate for such results.

133. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you think there is excessive consolidation in the defense industrial base? If yes, do you think it harms national security, and what should DOD do to address this issue?

Mr. COLBY. I believe the Nation was far better off when we had dozens of actively competing defense enterprise in the defense industrial base. The reasons for this consolidation are complex and contested as to their origins, but I believe it should

be the Department's policy to restore more competition in the DIB. If confirmed, I would advocate for such a result.

134. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what tools does DOD have to address price gouging, wasteful spending, and fraud by defense contractors?

Mr. COLBY. I do not have sufficient information to provide an informed assessment on this important matter. If confirmed, I would support efforts to address them.

135. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you believe current DOD and government-wide contracting rules favor prime defense contractors at the expense of new market entrants or smaller competitors?

Mr. COLBY. I do not have sufficient information to provide an informed assessment on this important matter. If confirmed, I would support efforts to ensure all enterprises are treated fairly, with a focus on delivering capabilities at scale and rapidly from a diverse and competitive array of enterprises.

136. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you believe DOD contractors should be able to access, use, or own government data for commercial, non-DOD purposes?

Mr. COLBY. I do not have sufficient information to provide an informed assessment on this important matter.

137. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you believe DOD should strive to adopt a modular, open systems approach wherever possible?

Mr. COLBY. I have not had the opportunity to explore this issue in depth, but my sense is that the Department should strive to adopt a modular, open systems approach (MOSA) in the development of new capabilities wherever possible, so it can achieve higher efficiency and greater adaptability while fostering a culture of innovation. My understanding is that the benefits of MOSA designs include the ability to add, remove, or replace components throughout the life cycle of a system, providing opportunities for enhanced performance, and innovation. These benefits could apply to both hardware and software systems.

138. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what is the role of independent cost analysis for informing DOD decisionmaking?

Mr. COLBY. Independent cost analysis is very important in informing DOD decisionmaking. While I support robust additional defense spending, DOD decisions must take cost into account, especially in an era in which we face multiple threats, above all from China, and our national fiscal situation is challenging.

139. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what do you see as the role of research and development in advancing DOD's national security objectives?

Mr. COLBY. Research and development (R&D) is critical to advancing the Department's national security objectives. In an era of rapidly evolving threats and technological advancements, R&D serves as the engine powering the U.S. military's ability to maintain its technological edge and address daunting security challenges. If confirmed, I would work avidly to promote our R&D efforts in advancing our national security objectives.

140. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you think DOD should assess the success of a research and development tax credit or research and development tax deduction based on whether it led to companies increasing investments in research and development?

Mr. COLBY. I am not in a position to provide an informed answer to this important question. If confirmed, I would make a point of investigating it and would be prepared to provide one upon request.

MANAGING THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE

141. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, 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 DOD expedited or additional hiring authorities if they will be disregarded without any public justification or consultation with Congress?

Mr. COLBY. I do not have any non-public information regarding decisions or policies about probationary employees in DOD. As a result, I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, however, I would advocate

for responsible stewardship of the personnel authorities granted by Congress and on building and sustaining a capable and efficient workforce for the Department.

142. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, press reports indicate DOD has paused four trainings, including harassment prevention and No Fear Act training. Do you support harassment prevention training?

Mr. COLBY. I do not have any non-public information regarding this matter. As a result, I am not in a position to give an informed assessment of these reports. If confirmed, I would be prepared to investigate this question and provide an answer upon request.

143. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you support the firing of probationary employees and if so, do you think there should be any exceptions and on what basis?

Mr. COLBY. I do not have any non-public information regarding decisions or policies about probationary employees in DOD. As a result, I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, however, I would advocate for responsible stewardship of all personnel authorities and workforce optimization initiatives granted by Congress and on building and sustaining a capable and efficient workforce for the Department.

144. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, how will DOD ensure that any reductions in force preserve military preparedness and national security?

Mr. COLBY. I do not have any non-public information regarding decisions or policies about reductions in force in DOD. As a result, I am not in a position to give an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, however, I would advocate for personnel policies and workforce optimization initiatives that promote military preparedness and national security.

JUDGE ADVOCATES GENERAL

145. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what is your understanding of the role of the Judge Advocates General (JAG)?

Mr. COLBY. I understand that the Judge Advocates General provide independent legal advice to the leadership of their respective Military Departments.

146. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what is your understanding of the importance of the JAG Corps providing independent, apolitical advice?

Mr. COLBY. I think it is important that commanders have expert legal advice. It is my understanding that Judge Advocates in the field, in support of their Services or at joint commands, have a responsibility to provide independent legal advice to military commanders.

147. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, if you are confirmed as USD(P), do you commit to protecting the independence and apolitical nature of the JAG Corps?

Mr. COLBY. The Judge Advocates General report to, and primarily advise the leadership of their respective Military Departments. 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. If confirmed, I would follow the applicable laws on this.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS POLICY

148. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, the Sentinel program has a cost overrun of 81 percent, resulting in a Nunn-McCurdy Breach. Do you agree with the continuation of this program?

Mr. COLBY. I do. I believe an ICBM leg of the Triad is very important.

149. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, the continuing expense of trillions of dollars on nuclear weapons cuts into other priorities of the Department of Defense, such as deterring China. Do you support not centering nuclear weapons in our defense policy to save money and make us all safer?

Mr. COLBY. I do not. I believe the nuclear deterrent remains essential and indeed more so in an era of such greatened danger.

150. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, please provide information on the types of consulting services that you provided for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Mr. COLBY. I provided expertise on strategic and nuclear deterrence issues to LLNL including as part of their seminar and conference series'.

151. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you support resuming nuclear weapon life testing?

Mr. COLBY. Based on my understanding of our current capabilities, I do not believe a resumption of nuclear weapon live testing is necessary or would be advisable at this time.

UKRAINE AND RUSSIA POLICY

152. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what do you consider to be the role of offensive cyber operations in advancing U.S. national security?

Mr. COLBY. Offensive cyber operations are critical both for deterrence, in providing a credible form of retaliation, as well as in wartime, in ensuring effective warfighting capabilities.

153. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, under what conditions should DOD suspend offensive cyber operations?

Mr. COLBY. I have not been briefed or informed to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would be prepared to investigate this question and provide an answer upon request.

154. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what do you consider to be the role of sharing intelligence information with allies to advance U.S. national security?

Mr. COLBY. Sharing intelligence information with allies can be and is often highly valuable in advancing U.S. national security objectives, although it must be weighed against other factors such as the protection of sources and methods, diplomatic strategy, and military effectiveness.

155. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, under what conditions should DOD or the Intelligence Community suspend sharing intelligence information?

Mr. COLBY. Sharing intelligence information with allies can be and is often highly valuable in advancing U.S. national security objectives, but it must be weighed against other factors such as the protection of sources and methods, diplomatic strategy, and military effectiveness.

156. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you support President Trump cutting off aid to Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. I have not been briefed or informed to provide an informed answer to this question. If confirmed, I would be prepared to investigate this question and provide an answer upon request.

That said, I support the President's effort to bring the tragic war in Ukraine to an end, as well as the diplomacy needed to accomplish that objective.

157. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, did Russia begin the war in Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. As I indicated in my hearing, I do not believe it is advisable, prudent, or appropriate for me to weigh in on this fraught matter in a time of great diplomatic sensitivity. My goal is not to disrupt any moves toward peace.

I should add that it is the norm in delicate negotiations not only in government but also in the private sector to avoid commenting on sensitive matters at such junctures.

158. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, did Russia illegally invade Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. As I indicated in my hearing, I do not believe it is advisable, prudent, or appropriate for me to weigh in on this fraught matter in a time of great diplomatic sensitivity. My goal is to avoid disrupting any moves toward peace.

I should add that it is the norm in delicate negotiations not only in government but also in the private sector to avoid commenting on sensitive matters at such junctures.

159. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you condemn Russia's abduction of Ukrainian children?

Mr. COLBY. As I indicated in my hearing, I do not believe it is advisable, prudent, or appropriate for me to weigh in on this fraught matter in a time of great diplomatic sensitivity. My goal is to avoid disrupting any moves toward peace.

I should add that it is the norm in delicate negotiations not only in government but also in the private sector to avoid commenting on sensitive matters at such junctures.

160. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you support ensuring that Ukraine is at the table for any negotiations regarding the war between Russia and Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. As I indicated in my hearing, I do not believe it is advisable, prudent, or appropriate for me to weigh in on this fraught matter in a time of great diplomatic sensitivity. My goal is to avoid disrupting any moves toward peace.

I should add that it is the norm in delicate negotiations not only in government but also in the private sector to avoid commenting on sensitive matters at such junctures.

161. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, what war crimes has Russia committed against Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. As I indicated in my hearing, I do not believe it is advisable, prudent, or appropriate for me to weigh in on this fraught matter in a time of great diplomatic sensitivity. My goal is to avoid disrupting any moves toward peace.

I should add that it is the norm in delicate negotiations not only in government but also in the private sector to avoid commenting on sensitive matters at such junctures.

162. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you condemn these war crimes?

Mr. COLBY. As I indicated in my hearing, I do not believe it is advisable, prudent, or appropriate for me to weigh in on this fraught matter in a time of great diplomatic sensitivity. My goal is to avoid disrupting any moves toward peace.

I should add that it is the norm in delicate negotiations not only in government but also in the private sector to avoid commenting on sensitive matters at such junctures.

163. Senator WARREN. Mr. Colby, do you believe that Russia should immediately withdraw Russian forces from Ukraine?

Mr. COLBY. As I indicated in my hearing, I do not believe it is advisable, prudent, or appropriate for me to weigh in on this fraught matter in a time of great diplomatic sensitivity. My goal is to avoid disrupting any moves toward peace.

I should add that it is the norm in delicate negotiations not only in government but also in the private sector to avoid commenting on sensitive matters at such junctures.

NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT

PN12-9

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:

Elbridge Colby, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy,
vice Colin Hackett Kahl, 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. Elbridge A. Colby, which was transmitted to the Committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ELBRIDGE A. COLBY

Education:

- Harvard College
 - 1998 to 2002
 - AB, History, magna cum laude
- Yale Law School
 - 2006 to 2009
 - JD

Employment Record:

- The Marathon Initiative
 - Co-founder and Principal
 - Washington, DC
 - July 2019 to Present
- Center for a New American Security (CNAS)
 - Director of the Defense Program
 - Washington, DC
 - August 2018 to July 2019
- U.S. Department of Defense
 - Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development
 - Washington, DC
 - May 2017 to July 2018
- Center for a New American Security (CNAS)
 - Robert M. Gates Senior Fellow
 - Washington, DC
 - January 2014 to May 2017
- CNA (Center for Naval Analyses)
 - Principal Analyst
 - Alexandria, VA
 - September 2010 to December 2013
- U.S. Department of Defense
 - Policy Advisor (as IPA detailee from Yale University)
 - Washington, DC and Geneva Switzerland
 - September 2009 to August 2010
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence
 - Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff
 - Washington, D.C. area
 - June 2005 to -June 2006
- President's Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction
 - Staff Member
 - Crystal City, VA
 - -June 2004 to -June 2005
- Central Intelligence Agency
 - Trainee
 - McLean, VA
 - -September 2003 to -June 2004
- U.S. Department of State
 - Special Assistant, Acting Political Officer, and Governance Officer (detailed to Coalition Provisional Authority)
 - Washington, D.C. and Baghdad, Iraq
 - -June 2002 to -September 2003

Honors and Awards:

- U.S. Department of Defense
 - Distinguished Public Service Medal (for work on 2018 National Defense Strategy)

- Exceptional Public Service Medal (for work on 2010 New START Treaty)
- U.S. Department of State
 - Superior Honor Award (for service with Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq)
 - Meritorious Honor Awards (2, for work on budget and resource strategy issues)
- Harvard College
 - John Harvard Scholar, 2000-1; Harvard College Scholar, 1998 to 2000, 2001 to 2002.

[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. Elbridge A. Colby in connection with his nomination follows:]

UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

ROOM SR-228

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

(202) 224-3871

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES FORM

BIOGRAPHICAL AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION REQUESTED OF
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 (i.e. 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 used.)
Elbridge A. Colby
2. **Position to which nominated:**
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
3. **Date of nomination:**
January 20, 2025
4. **Education:** List names of secondary and higher education institutions 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.
 - Yale Law School
 - JD
 - 2006 to 2009
 - Harvard College
 - AB
 - 1998 to 2002

- Groton School
- 1994 to 1998

5. **Employment record:** List all jobs held since college or in the last 10 years, whichever is less, including the title or description of 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 separate period of employment):

- The Marathon Initiative
 - Principal and co-Founder
 - Washington, DC and remote
 - 2019 to Present. (NB: The Marathon Initiative incubated as a program within the Center for European Policy Analysis from 2019-2020, becoming fully independent in 2020.)
- Center for a New American Security
 - Director of the Defense Program
 - Washington, DC
 - 2018 to 2019
- U.S. Department of Defense
 - Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development
 - Washington, DC
 - 2017 to 2018
- Center for a New American Security
 - Robert M. Gates Fellow/Senior Fellow
 - Washington, DC
 - 2014 to 2017

I also held part-time, consultancy, or adjunct status in addition to my above employment with the following organizations during this period:

- 2021 to Present: Senior Advisor, American Global Strategies
- 2022 to Present: Senior Policy Advisor, TechSource, Inc.
- 2021 to Present: Consultant/Advisor, Telemus Group
- 2018 to 2021: Senior Advisor, WestExec Advisors
- 2009 to 2017 and 2019-Present: Consultant, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Global Security Directorate
- 2013 to 2017: Senior Advisor, CNA
- 2013 to 2017: Consultant, Institute for Defense Analyses.
- 2016 to 2017 (and 2006-2009): Adjunct staff member, RAND Corporation.
- 2015: Adjunct Associate Professor, Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (New York, NY)

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.

I served as an unpaid Special Government Employee for the Department of Defense (Defense Science Board and Threat Reduction Advisory Committee) and the Department of State (Under Secretary of State from Political Affairs) during the period 2019-2021. During that period, I participated in foreign government-sponsored substantive trips to South Korea (2019) and Taiwan (2020), the latter organized by the Wilson Center. I received rulings from both the Departments of Defense and State ethics legal officers ruling those trips as permitted under ethics/emoluments rules. I would be happy to provide records of those judgments to the Committee.

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):

- Department of Defense, Defense Science Board, advisor to 2019 Summer Study (unpaid).
- Department of Defense, Threat Reduction Advisory Committee, advisor to 2019 study on future of U.S. nuclear deterrent (unpaid).
- Department of State, Special Government Employee Consultant, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, 2019 to 2021 (unpaid).

- Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Policy Advisor to the Secretary for the New START negotiating team, 2009 to 2010.
- 2008 to 2009: Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, Expert Advisor.
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, 2005 to 2006.
- President's Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, Staff Member, 2004 to 2005.
- Central Intelligence Agency, Trainee, 2003 to 2004.
- Coalition Provisional Authority, Baghdad Governorate and Governance Team, 2003.
- Department of State, Office of Israeli and Palestinian Affairs, 2003.
- Department of State, Bureau of Resource Management, Special Assistant, 2002 to 2003.

8. Business relationships: (List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, educational or other institution)

- American Global Strategies, Senior Advisor, 2021 to Present.
- TechSource, Inc, 2022 to Present.
- Telemus, 2021 to Present.
- Consultant, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, 2019 to Present (and 2009 to 2017).
- Advisory Committee member, Krach Institute for Technology Diplomacy, Purdue University.
- Trustee, The Jonathan E. Colby 2009 Long-Term Trust. (Resigned January 16, 2025)
- Trustee, The Susan H. Colby 2010 Long-Term Trust. (Resigned January 16, 2025)
- Trustee, The Jonathan and Susan Colby 2007 Survivorship Insurance Trust. (Resigned January 16, 2025)
- Jonathan E. Colby 1993 Insurance Trust. (Resigned January 16, 2025)

For my book dealings, including translations, I am represented by Brandt and Hochman Literary Agents in New York City.

9. Memberships: (List all current memberships and offices that you hold, as well as any memberships and offices you have previously held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable and other organizations)

- Member, The Council on Foreign Relations
- Member, The Metropolitan Club, Washington, DC
- Member, The Brook Club, New York, NY (Previously member of Board of Governors, 2010-2017)
- Member, The Chevy Chase Club, Chevy Chase, MD
- Member, The Pilgrims of the United States, New York, NY
- Member, The Society of the Cincinnati, New Hampshire Chapter

Previously:

- Member, International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2004-2024
- Member, Porcellian Club, Harvard College, 1998 to 2002 (Vice President, 2001-2002)
- Member, Elizabethan Club, Yale University, -2007 to 2009
- Member, Shabtai, Yale University, -2007 to 2009
- Member, Yale Law School Association Executive Committee, 2016 to 2019
- David Rockefeller Fellow, The Trilateral Commission, 2014 to 2016

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, Republican Party in Washington, DC.

(c) Itemize all individual political contributions of \$100 or more to any, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity for the past 5 years. List each individual contribution (not the total amount contributed to the person or entity) over this period:

I have reviewed my own records as well as online sources and identified the following donations since January 2020:

- \$250 to Winred (Donald J. Trump National Committee Joint Fundraising Committee) on July 14, 2024
- \$100 to Winred (Bernie Moreno) on April 27, 2024
- \$250 to Josh Hawley for Senate on January 24, 2024
- \$1,000 to Trump Save America Joint Fundraising Committee on January 23, 2024
- \$900 to Never Surrender, Inc. on January 23, 2024
- \$100 to Winred (Riley Moore) on October 27, 2023
- \$1,000 to Jim Banks for Senate on June 12, 2023
- \$250 to Waging Peace (Mike Gallagher) on June 6, 2023
- \$520.51 to Restore Our Nation on May 24, 2023
- \$50 to Winred (Team Joni Ernst and Herschel Walker) on December 1, 2022
- \$100 to Winred (Joni Ernst) on November 12, 2022
- \$50 to Win red (Eric Schmitt) on November 10, 2022
- \$50 to Winred (Kari Lake for Governor) on November 5, 2022
- \$50 to Winred (Dan Bolduc) on November 5, 2022
- \$100 to Winred (Mike Lee) on July 29, 2022
- \$250 to Winred (Ron Desantis for Governor) on July 8, 2022
- \$250 to Blake Masters for Senate on July 7, 2022
- \$50 for Matthew Foldi for Congress on June 23, 2022
- \$100 to Winred (Adam Laxalt) on June 8, 2022
- \$250 to Alex Gray for Senate on June 2, 2022
- \$100 to Winred (Marco Rubio) on March 17, 2022
- \$100 to Winred (John Cornyn) on March 17, 2022
- \$500 to Alex Gray for Senate on March 8, 2022
- \$100 to Winred (Blake Masters) on July 27, 2021
- \$500 to JD Vance for Senate on May 27, 2021
- \$250 to Champion American Values on May 23, 2021
- \$500 to Friends of Ron Desantis on May 6, 2021
- \$50 to Winred (Jim Banks) on March 1, 2021
- \$250 to Mike Gallagher for Wisconsin on February 23, 2021
- \$100 to Winred (Kelly Loeffler) on November 9, 2020
- \$100 to Winred (David Perdue) on November 7, 2020
- \$100 to Winred (Dan Sullivan) on September 29, 2020
- \$100 to Winred (Bill Hagerty) on August 3, 2020
- \$250 to Mike Gallagher for Wisconsin on June 8, 2020
- \$500 to Donald J. Trump for President on April 23, 2020

11. **Honors and Awards** (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements):

- U.S. Department of Defense, Medal for Distinguished Public Service, 2019 (for work on the 2018 National Defense Strategy).
- U.S. Department of Defense, Medal for Exceptional Public Service, 2010 (for work on New START).
- U.S. Department of State Superior Honor Award, 2003 (for service with the State Department in Iraq).

- U.S. Department of State Meritorious Honor Awards, 2002 and 2003 (for work in Resource Management).
- U.S.-Japan Foundation Leaders Program, 2010 to 2011.
- Atlantik-Brücke German-American Young Leaders Conference, 2009.
- Yale Law School Public Interest Fellow, 2009 to 2010.
- Harvard College awards: John Harvard Scholar, 2000 to 2001; Harvard College Scholar, 1998 to 2000, 2001 to 2002.

12. **Published writings** (List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, or other published materials which you have written or for which you served as co-author or editor, including articles and blogs published on the internet):

Based upon review of my publications, my own records, online sources, and memory, I have assembled the following list of publications. Given that I have been active in public discussion for almost two decades, I have made my best effort to be as comprehensive as possible.

Please see Attachment A.

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).

Based upon review of my speeches, my own records, online sources, and memory, I have assembled the following list of speeches. Given that I have been active in public discussion for almost two decades, I have made my best effort to be as comprehensive as possible.

Please see Attachment B.

COMMITMENTS IN FURTHERANCE OF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

NOTE: In order to exercise their legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress timely receive testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch. A simple “yes” or “no” response is appropriate.

14. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate Committees of Congress?

I do.

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?

I do.

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?

I do.

17. Do you agree, if confirmed, to consult with 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?

I do.

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?

I do.

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?

I do.

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?

I do.

FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS

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?

I will.

22. Do you have any plans, commitments or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government? If so, explain.

I do not.

ATTACHMENT A: PUBLISHED WRITINGS

Books

- *The Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict* (Yale University Press, 2021).
- Translations: Mandarin Chinese on Taiwan (Ministry of National Defense, 2022); Polish, (PISM, 2023); Korean (ParkYoung, September 30, 2023); Japanese (Nikkei, 2023).
- *Asia First: A New U.S. Defense Strategy* [English translation of Japanese title—book is in Japanese only] (Bunshun Shinso, 2024).
- *Strategic Stability: Contending Interpretations* (U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), co-editor of the volume.

Articles

- “The U.S. and Taiwan Must Change Course,” *The Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 2024.
- “Only One Priority Makes Sense for American Foreign Policy,” *American Compass*, June 25, 2024.
- “America must face reality and prioritise China over Europe,” *Financial Times*, May 23, 2024.
- “Taiwan must get serious on defense,” *Taipei Times*, May 11, 2024.
- “It Will Be Decided Here,” *Hoover Digest*, Spring 2024.
- “U.S. Hawks Must Finally Get Real About China,” *Time*, February 20, 2024.
- “Taiwans Zukunft betrifft die Schweiz,” *Schweizer Monat*, November 1, 2023.
- “World Events Are Not Going America’s Way,” *The Spectator*, September 18, 2023.
- “How We Can Help Ukraine While Genuinely Prioritizing Asia,” *Time*, July 14, 2023.
- “The Threat of A US-China War Requires A US-Israel Reset,” *The Times of Israel*, July 4, 2023.
- “Why US Needs A More Adaptive Diplomacy With India,” *The Economic Times*, June 22, 2023.
- “To avert war with China, the U.S. must prioritize Taiwan over Ukraine,” *Washington Post*, May 18, 2023 (with Alex Velez-Green).
- “China’s Military Buildup Show Its Ambitions Go Well Beyond Taiwan,” *Nikkei Asia*, April 7, 2023.
- “The Correct Conservative Approach to Ukraine Shifts the Focus to China,” *Time*, March 21, 2023.
- “In Iraq, Foreseeable Costs Outweighed Likely Benefits,” *National Review*, March 16, 2023.
- “The real and acute threat of a Sino-US conflict over Taiwan,” *Hindustan Times*, March 11, 2023.
- “A Strategy of Denial for the Western Pacific,” *Proceedings—U.S. Naval Institute*, February 28, 2023.
- “How America can Save Taiwan,” *UnHerd*, November 9, 2022.
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- “Why Not to Attack Iran,” *The National Interest*, January 11, 2012 (with Austin Long).
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- “How Real Conservatives Should Think About Foreign Policy,” *ForeignPolicy.com*, October 2010.
- “Hey AEI, Here’s How Real Conservatives Should Think About Defense Spending,” *Foreign Policy*, September 30, 2010.
- “Requirements for Deterrence: Two Challenging Scenarios,” *Strategic Insights*, September 2009.
- Review of George Perkovich and James Acton’s *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons*, *St Antony’s International Review*, February 2009.
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- “Nuclear Abolition: A Dangerous Illusion,” *Orbis*, Summer 2008.
- “Expanded Deterrence,” *Policy Review*, June 2008.
- “The New Deterrence,” *The Weekly Standard*, April 2008.
- “Why We Need to Get Osama,” *The Washington Times*, February 2008.
- Review of Richard Posner *Not a Suicide Pact*, *Ethics and International Affairs*, September 2007.
- “Making Intelligence Smart,” *Policy Review*, August 2007.
- “Restoring Deterrence,” *Orbis*, Summer 2007.
- Review of George Tenet memoirs, *The National Interest*, May 2007.
- “Intelligence Reform Crossroads,” *The Washington Times*, January 2007 (with Kate Heinzelman).
- Articles in high school and college papers, -1994 to 2002.

NB: While not published under my name as author, I have also given numerous extensive interviews to newspapers, magazines, and other media outlets, including especially in the foreign press. I would be happy to furnish those as well, if of interest.

Book Chapters

- “Why China Matters,” in *Rebuilding American Capitalism: A Handbook for Conservative Policymakers*, *American Compass*, 2023.
- “Chapter Two: US Defence Strategy and Alliances in the Indo-Pacific,” in *Alliances, Nuclear Weapons and Escalation: Managing Deterrence in the 21st Century*, S. Fröling and A. O’Neil, Eds., *Australian National University Press*, 2021.
- “A World Order Critique of Nuclear Abolition,” in *Global Nuclear Disarmament: Strategic, Political, and Regional Perspectives*. N. Hynek and M. Smetana, Eds., *Routledge*, 2016.
- “The Need for Limited Nuclear Options,” in *Challenges in U.S. National Security Policy*. D. Ochmanek and M. Sulmeyer, Eds., *RAND Corporation*, 2014.
- “The United States and Discriminate Nuclear Options in the Cold War,” in *On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century*. J. Larsen and K. Kartchner, Eds. *Stanford University Press*, 2014.
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- “Why Nuclear Deterrence is Still Relevant” in *Deterrence: Rising Powers, Rogue Regimes, and Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*. A. Lowther Ed., *Palgrave MacMillan*, 2012.
- “U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy and Policymaking: The Asian Experience,” in *Nuclear Weapons and NATO*. J. McCausland et al, Eds., *Strategic Studies Institute*, 2012.
- “U.S.-Central European Relations After the ‘Pivot,’” in *Navigating Uncertainty: U.S.-Central European Relations*, *Center for European Policy Analysis*, 2012.

- “Chapters on the U.S. nuclear force, U.S. alliances, deterring WMD terrorism, and ways to address the challenge of a nuclear Iran in *In the Eyes of the Experts: Analysis and Comments on America’s Strategic Posture*. T. Bolz, Ed., U.S. Institute of Peace, 2009. (Compendium of memoranda drafted for the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States.)

Studies

- “Getting Strategic Deprioritization Right,” *The Marathon Initiative*, June 23, 2023 (with Wess Mitchell Jakub Grygiel, and Matt Pottinger).
- “No Sanctuary: The PLA’s Kinetic Threat to the Homeland,” *The Marathon Initiative*, December 1, 2023 (with William Kim).
- “Sharing the Load: Developing Better Strategies for Burden Sharing,” *The Marathon Initiative*, November 1, 2022 (with Robert Almelo Delfeld).
- “Building a Strategy for Escalation and War Termination,” *The Marathon Initiative*, October 1, 2022 (with Yashar Parsie).
- *From Sanctuary to Battlefield: A Framework for a U.S. Defense and Deterrence Strategy for Space*. GNAS, January 2016.
- “Russia’s Evolving Nuclear Doctrine and its Implications,” *Fondation pour la Recherche Strategique*, January 2016.
- “Countering Russian Nuclear Strategy in Central Europe,” in *Frontline Allies: War and Change in Central Europe*. Center for European Analysis, November 2015, 87-101. (chapter author)
- *Solving Long Division: The Geopolitical Implications of Korean Unification*. GNAS, December 2015. (co-author)
- “A Nuclear Strategy and Posture for 2030” in *Project Atom: A Competitive Strategies Approach to Defining U.S. Nuclear Strategy and Posture for 2025-2050*. CSIS, May 2015. (author of chapter on future nuclear strategy and posture in CSIS competitive nuclear strategy study)
- *More Willing and Able: Charting China’s International Security Activism*. GNAS, May 2015. (co-author)
- *Nuclear Weapons in the Third Offset Strategy*. GNAS, January 2015.
- *Tailored Coercion: Competition and Risk in Maritime Asia*. GNAS, March 2014. (co-author)
- *The Israeli “Nuclear Alert” of 1973: Deterrence and Signaling in Crisis*. CNA, April 2013. (lead co-author)
- *Nuclear Weapons and U.S.-China Relations: A Way Forward*. CSIS, March 2013. (lead co-author)
- *Strengthening U.S. Nuclear Deterrence in the Western Pacific Beyond 2025*. CNA, August 2012. (lead co-author)
- *Grand Strategy: Contending Contemporary Analyst Views and Implications for the U.S. Navy*. CNA, November 2011.
- Also co-authored studies on aspects of Middle Eastern, proliferation, and related issues for CNA.
- *Fighting a Nuclear-Armed Regional Opponent: Is Victory Possible?* CSBA for DOD/Office of Net Assessments, December 2007. (with Peter Wilson).

Social Media

- I post on X (formerly Twitter) as @elbridgecolby.
- I very rarely posted on LinkedIn, under my name, though these were usually article reposts.

ATTACHMENT B: SPEECHES AND OTHER PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Formal Speeches and Prominent Panel, Interview, or Media Appearances

Testimony

- Testified before the House Armed Services Committee, September 23, 2020, on “The Role of Allies and Partners in U.S. Military Strategy and Operations,” prepared statement available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS00/20200923/110884/HHRG-116-AS00-Wstate-ColbyE-20200923.pdf>.
- Delivered Statement for the Record to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, June 20, 2019, on “The Implications of China Developing a World-Class Military: First and Foremost a Regional Challenge.” Available

at <https://www.uscc.gov/hearings/world-class-military-assessing-chinas-global-military-ambitions>.

- Testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, January 29, 2019, on China, Russia, and the National Defense Strategy. Available at <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/19-01-29-china-and-russia>.
- Testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, September 22, 2016, on “Diplomacy and Security in the South China Sea: After the Tribunal.” Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcKtSTiD51M>.
- Testified before the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, November 3, 2015, on “Future Options for the U.S. Nuclear Deterrent: Views from Project Atom.” Available at <https://www.cnas.org/press/in-the-news/video-elbridge-colby-before-hasc-on-future-options-for-the-u-s-nuclear-deterrent>.
- Testified before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, April 1, 2015, on “Understanding and Dealing with China’s Growing Military Power: Recommendations for U.S. Defense Posture and Policy.” Prepared statement available at <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Colby%20USCC%20Testimony%201%20April%202015.pdf>.

Panel Appearances, Speeches, Interviews, et al

NB: I tend to speak from informal notes or extemporaneously.

- Interview with Tucker Carlson, November 10, 2024, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtsGqGc-luw>.
- “The New Republican Statecraft with Elbridge Colby,” Intercollegiate Studies Institute, October 24, 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCfjIhAyZQw>.
- “Meridian Summit 2024—Securing an Insecure World,” Meridian International Center, October 21, 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuBds1W4Age&list=LL&index=6>.
- “Giants at the Crossroads: China and the United States,” Speech at the Free University of Brussels, Belgium, October 16, 2024.
- “The Right Foreign Policy for Conservatives is Prioritization,” Speech at the National Conservatism Conference, Washington, DC, July 9, 2024, available at: <https://nationalconservatism.org/natcon-4-2024/presenters/elbridge-colby/>.
- “Why America must pivot from Ukraine to Taiwan—former Trump adviser Elbridge Colby | SpectatorTV,” The Spectator, July 7, 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70qlTXu6W-M>.
- Nixon Seminar on Conservative Realism and National Security, Nixon Library, June 4, 2024, available at <https://nixonseminar.com/2024/06/the-nixon-seminar-june-4-2024/>.
- I also participated in monthly such seminars going back several years. They are available at <https://nixonseminar.com/seminars/>.
- “South Korea’s Nuclear Armament? A Conversation with Elbridge Colby,” Jiyeon Kim’s Knowledge, June 2, 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNmDyGfD2Nw>.
- “A former defense official warns about China’s military power,” NPR, April 25, 2024, available at: <https://www.npr.org/2024/04/25/1247095033/a-former-defense-official-warns-about-china-s-military-power>.
- “Ex-Trump Defense Official: Taiwan Should Stop Prioritizing Ukraine | Taiwan Talks EP343,” Taiwan Talks, April 12, 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73zxEv-qMsc>.
- “The Kevin Roberts Show: Episode 28, Elbridge Colby,” Heritage Foundation, August 24, 2022, available at: <https://shows.acast.com/kevinroberts/episodes/elbridge-colby>.
- “New Cold War: US-China Rivalry in the 21st Century,” Richard Heydarian Vlogs, April 29, 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEsQ6l-j3AY>.
- “Elbridge Colby thinks the US military is dramatically unprepared to defend our interests in Asia,” Washington Examiner, April 1, 2024, available at: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/courage-strength-optinism/2944630/elbridge-colby-us-military-interests-in-asia>.

- “China v. Ukraine with Elbridge Colby; TikTok’s Clock; Election Meddling Is Cool Now?” GoodFellows—The Hoover Institution, March 20, 2024, available at: <https://www.hoover.org/research/china-v-ukraine-elbridge-colby-tiktoks-clock-election-meddling-cool-now>.
- “Firing Line Debate with Elbridge Colby and Timothy Snyder: The United States Should Prioritize Taiwan over Ukraine,” Buckley Institute, Yale University, March 6, 2024, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGs7DpvZv1c>.
- “Elbridge Colby: A Geopolitical Run on the Bank is Precisely the Danger we are Now Courting,” Chicago’s Morning Answer, February 6, 2024, available at: <https://morninganswerchicago.com/elbridge-colby-a-geopolitical-run-on-the-bank-is-precisely-the-danger-we-are-now-courting>.
- “US needs a ‘combination’ of a ‘forceful’ response to the drone attack in Jordan,” Sky News (Australia), February 2, 2024, available at: <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/commentary/us-needs-a-combination-of-a-forceful-response-to-the-drone-attack-in-jordan/video/1dd4b033cdd4fa4dcafaed1720ee41fa>.
- “Will Europe lose World War III?” panel with UnHerd, January 31, 2024, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOZvGwzo3GQ&t=591s>.
- “Where is US policy heading?” even with Chatham House, January 25, 2024, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ni118M_Qi-Y.
- “A Decade of Decline: The Need to Restore America’s Military Power,” panel at The Heritage Foundation, January 24, 2024, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/event/decade-decline-the-need-restore-americas-military-power>.
- “Jacek Bartosiak & Elbridge Colby—Failure of US Primacy,” Strategy & Future, January 29, 2024, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZM3VHx_wOZs.
- “Media Interview: Asahi,” Asahi Shimbun, December 24, 2023, available at: https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASRDP3Q6XRDKUHBI021.html?iref=comranking_realrank04
- “Where is the ‘International’ in ‘International Order’—with Elbridge Colby,” Midrats Podcast, December 10, 2023, available at: <https://www.speaker.com/episode/episode-674-where-is-the-international-in-international-order-with-elbridge-colby--57967100>
- “The Most Dangerous Moment: A Debate on America’s Role in the Pacific,” Hoover Institution Uncommon Knowledge Podcast, December 5, 2023, available at: <https://youtu.be/LMRYul2Jefg?si=xgYBSI-IYYTtipTXb>.
- Speech to the Baltimore Council on Foreign Affairs, November 6, 2023., available at: <https://youtu.be/4CUyJWJatsY?si=Lg38Renh3vuECcYY>.
- “Answering the Threat of a Third War Breaking Out,” The John Batchelor Show, October 29, 2023, available at: <https://audioboom.com/posts/8392095-answering-the-threat-of-a-third-war-breaking-out-4-8-the-strategy-of-denial-american-defense>.
- “The Morality of the Strategy of Denial,” Providence Magazine’s Christianity & National Security Conference, October 26, 2023, available at: <https://www.themarathoninitiative.org/2023/10/providence-magazines-sixth-annual-christianity-national-security-conference-keynote/>
- “US-Taiwan Relations: A Global Partnership for Peace and Security,” Global Taiwan Initiative Annual Symposium, October 17, 2023, available at: <https://youtu.be/XwxgdRg8faY?si=73jyuvFbu270cJI>
- “Kaos Theory Episode 4: Elbridge Colby,” Kaos Theory Podcast, October 15, 2023, available at: <https://www.urbankaoboy.com/p/kaos-theory-episode-4-elbridge-colby>.
- “The View from Manila with Richard Heydarian,” One News PH (Philippines), July 24, 2023, available at: <https://youtu.be/FbEagGsvCM4?si=tvKYLIUXPCWUsla2>
- “Wicked Problem: The Challenge of China,” Aspen Ideas Festival, June 30, 2023, available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/live-blog/aspen-ideas-festival-live-updates-way-forward-china-rcna91995>
- “Three Beers and a Pipe Wrench,” Charles C. W Cooke Podcast, May 12, 2023, available at: <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/three-beers-and-a-pipe-wrench/>

- “Rethinking a Conservative Foreign Policy,” Wall Street Journal Free Expression Podcast with Gerard Baker, May 9, 2023, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/podcasts/opinion-free-expression/rethinking-a-conservative-foreign-policy/627e6201-fa78-4c55-a3f5-1eedcc9b3618>.
- “Debating American Strategy and Global Priorities, with Michael Mazarr and Elbridge Colby,” War on the Rocks, May 9, 2023, available at: <https://warontherocks.com/episode/unspent-rounds/28737/debating-american-strategy-and-global-priorities-with-michael-mazarr-and-elbridge-colby/>
- “Debate: Winning in Ukraine Is Critically Important for Deterring a War in Taiwan,” Hudson Institute, April 23, 2023, available at: <https://www.hudson.org/events/debate-winning-ukraine-critically-important-deterring-war-taiwan>.
- “Nixon National Energy Conference,” Remarks at The Nixon Foundation, April 19, 2023, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/live/ao2iYBsAerc?si=gzhhcXAMW5dTkjoR>.
- “China’s Mounting Challenge to US Hegemony,” The Intercepted Podcast, April 5, 2023, available at: https://theintercept.com/2023/04/05/intercepted-china-us-hegemony/?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=theintercept.
- “Elbridge Colby: China is more dangerous than Russia,” UnHerd, April 1, 2023 (interview).
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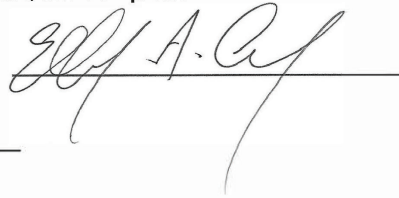
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Television

I have also appeared on television BBC, CBC, CNBC, CNN, C-SPAN, OW, Fox Business, Fox News, NHK, and Sky News, among others. I would be happy to provide clips.

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.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey A. Carl", is written over a horizontal line.

This 3rd day of February, 2025

