

**TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF: DR. TROY  
E. MEINK TO BE SECRETARY OF THE AIR  
FORCE; MR. MICHAEL P. DUFFEY TO BE UNDER  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION  
AND SUSTAINMENT; MR. EMIL G. MICHAEL  
TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR  
RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING; AND MR. KEITH  
M. BASS TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF  
DEFENSE FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

—————  
MARCH 27, 2025  
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**THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025**

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:31 a.m. in room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Roger Wicker (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ferns, Sullivan, Cramer, 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 DEB FISCHER**

Senator FISCHER. [Presiding.] I'll be chairing the hearing until Chairman Wicker joins us. He's unavoidably detained right now, and we're going to move ahead with the hearing.

The Senate Armed Services Committee meets today to consider the nominations of Dr. Troy Meink to be Secretary of the Air Force, Mr. Michael Duffey to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, Mr. Emil Michael to be Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, and Mr. Keith Bass to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. I want to begin by welcoming our witnesses and thanking them for their willingness to serve our country at this important time.

I'd also like to welcome your families and loved ones who are joining you today. Dr. Meink is joined today by his wife, Jean, son, Troy, daughter, Jenna, and stepbrother, Troy. Welcome to each of you. Mr. Duffey is joined by his wife, Morgan, daughter Reynolds, and son, Deans. Thank you for joining us on this special day.

Mr. Michael is joined by his wife, Julie, daughter Collette, son, Cairo, and his mother and father, and quite a few other family and friends. Welcome to you-all. Mr. Bass is joined by his two daughters, Kate and Erin, and his brother, Kevin. We are glad that each of you can be here with us today.

Our distinguished Chairman, as I said, was unable to be here at the start at the meeting, but at this time I ask unanimous consent to place a copy of his opening statement into the record. Without objection.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Roger F. Wicker follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN ROGER F. WICKER

I welcome all of our witnesses and their families, and I thank them for being here this morning. Their presence is timely. We are at a crossroads in American history. We face the most dangerous environment since World War II, and I am grateful that these individuals have stepped up to serve.

Dr. Troy Meink has been nominated to be the Secretary of the Air Force. More than ever before, our success as a joint force rests upon our airmen and guardians. We cannot deter or defeat the Chinese Communist Party without space superiority and air dominance. I was very glad to hear that the Administration is moving forward with the Next-Generation Air Dominance program. With that announcement, President Trump and Secretary Hegseth have taken the first step to maintain our mastery of the skies.

Today, our Air Force is suffering through a death spiral. We have billions of dollars of unpaid aircraft maintenance bills, a shrinking combat fleet, and a munitions shortage we need to fix.

We created the Space Force just 5 years ago, and it has grown rapidly. But we have numerous opportunities to accelerate our space control efforts and support the joint force from orbit. Dr. Meink's experience at the National Reconnaissance Office renders him uniquely qualified to ensure the Space Force continues its growth.

Managing weapons programs is only one aspect of the job for which Dr. Meink has been nominated. He will need to take care of our airmen and guardians. All the aircraft and satellites in the world are pointless unless we have the right support system for the people who develop, maintain, and operate those weapons systems.

I look forward to hearing Dr. Meink's plan to maintain space superiority and air dominance in the years to come.

Mr. Michael Duffey has been nominated to become the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment. If confirmed, he will face three major challenges.

First, he will encounter our current acquisition system, which is slow, outdated, and ill-suited to meet the urgent demands of modern warfare. In my Restoring Freedom's Forge plan, I outlined a game-changing approach to overhaul this system. We must streamline processes, embrace innovation, and deliver capabilities at the speed of relevance. It will take bold leadership to shift the culture of the acquisition workforce. We must encourage that workforce to leverage its authorities effectively and break free from its risk-averse habits.

Second, the Department of Defense (DOD) does not possess the capacity and capability to perform serious industrial base analysis at scale. If confirmed, Mr. Duffey will need to expand and re-focus existing organizations. They must improve our ability to answer fundamental questions about industrial policy, re-industrialization, and defense mobilization.

Third, Mr. Duffey would chair the Nuclear Weapons Council. His leadership will be critical as we modernize and adapt our long-neglected nuclear forces so they can meet the threat of the rapidly growing Chinese, Russian, and North Korean arsenals.

I look forward to hearing Mr. Duffey's views on these three challenges.

Mr. Emil Michael has been nominated to serve as the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering. In other words, he would be the Chief Technology Officer for the Department of Defense. If confirmed, Mr. Michael must ensure that the bright minds within our innovation ecosystem regain technological superiority against our adversaries, starting with China. Mr. Michael has worked with Secretary Gates on Iraq and Afghanistan and has been a part of a very small company

called Uber. I believe his diverse experience gives him a unique appreciation for the challenges he will encounter if confirmed to this role.

We must all ensure that the Department has an aggressive vision for innovation. That vision must resonate throughout the services and result in production at scale. I look forward to hearing from Mr. Michael about his vision for research and development and innovation.

Mr. Keith Bass has been tapped to become the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. This role oversees all Department of Defense health policies and programs. If confirmed, Mr. Bass would assume the role at a crucial time. The military health system faces persistent challenges in its structure, staffing, and the delivery of healthcare services. Mr. Bass has extensive leadership experience as White House Medical Director, as the Director of Medical Services at the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], and as the Medical Center Director at the West Texas Health Care System for the Department of Veterans Affairs. He is well-equipped to address these challenges within the military health system.

This system must provide routine, peacetime healthcare and simultaneously maintain a state of preparedness for large-scale combat. The Pentagon faces considerable challenges in recruiting and retaining both civilian and military medical personnel. This staffing problem directly affects the quality of care provided to servicemembers and their families.

I am eager to learn how Mr. Bass intends to tackle these issues and how he plans to equip the military health system so it can deliver top-notch care in peace-time and in potential future conflict.

With that, I turn to my colleague, Ranking Member Reed.

Senator FISCHER. With that, I turn to my colleague, Ranking Member Reed, for his opening statement.

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

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Gentlemen, congratulations on your nominations, and welcome to today's hearings. I would like to recognize your family members and guests, and I know they've been a source of great support to you throughout your entire lives. I also like to recognize Senator Rounds and Congressman Fitzgerald, who shortly will be introducing Dr. Meink and Mr. Duffey.

Dr. Meink, you have been nominated to be Secretary of the Air Force. You have served in the Air Force, both in uniform and as a civilian, including senior roles at the National Reconnaissance Office and as Under Secretary of the Air Force for Space. If confirmed, you would lead the Department of the Air Force during an important time.

After 2 decades of high operating tempo and continuous overseas deployments, the readiness of the Air Force has been strained. The Air Force is in the midst of modernizing several critical capabilities, including the bomber force, the ground-based intercontinental ballistic missile force, the Advanced Battle Management System Program, and several other cutting-edge efforts.

But modernization can only be successful if the Air Force appropriately balance its legacy platforms against new priorities, including uncrewed systems. Dr. Meink, I would ask that you share with the Committee how you would plan to address these various challenges.

Mr. Duffey, you have been nominated to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment or USD(A&S). Your background includes time with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, as well as the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The USD(A&S) has a wide range of duties, including delivering timely, cost-effective capabilities for the

Armed Forces, supervising all elements of the Defense Acquisition Enterprise and the Defense Industrial Base, overseeing the modernization of our nuclear forces, and serving as the principal advisor of the Secretary on Acquisition, Sustainment and Core Logistics.

If confirmed, streamlining and expediting the acquisition process must be one of your highest priorities. We need to field equipment to our warfighter as quickly while also ensuring acquisitions remain on budget and schedule. We must also grow the Defense Industrial Base to increase our capacity to produce defense equipment and enforce to more competition to drive efficiency and reduce costs.

Although some progress is made in recent years, the Defense Department's acquisition process still remains on the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) high-risk list. Mr. Duffey, I would like to know how you would plan to address these challenges.

Mr. Michael, you've been nominated to be Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering. Your background includes roles at technology companies such as Uber, and 10 years under the Defense Department and Defense Business Board. If confirmed, you'll be responsible managing the Department's investments in key modernization priorities such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, hypersonics, biotechnology, and microelectronics.

In order to maintain our technological lead over China and Russia in these technological areas, you'll need to advocate for investments in modernization program while the Department works through many near-term development and readiness issues. More broadly, you'll be charged with overcoming the Pentagon's so-called "Valley of Death", ensuring that the Department is able to turn research innovations into real operational capabilities.

This will require strengthening connections between research and engineering activities and the service acquisition programs and defense prime contractors. It'll also include investing in and protecting the people and infrastructure at organizations like DARPA [Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency], the Defense Labs and test ranges. Mr. Michael, I would like to know your views on your role regarding these challenges at this important moment.

Finally, Mr. Bass, you've been nominated to be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, or ASD(HA). You have extensive experience in the military healthcare system, having served in the Navy for 20 years before continuing to support the VA healthcare system as a civilian. The ASD(HA) is the principal advisor of the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness for all of the Department's force, health, protection policies, programs, and activities.

The ASD(HA) is also responsible for execution of the Department's medical mission, including the readiness of medical services during military operations, and for ensuring the health of the members of the military services and their families.

If confirmed, you'll need to address a number of pressing challenges for the Department, including the modernization of the military health system, and improving medical supports at the combat-

ant commanders. Mr. Bass, I hope you'll address these challenges in your testimony.

These are momentous challenges that I've outlined that will require all of your experience and skills, but I certainly want to thank you for your willingness to serve, and I look forward to your testimony.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Rounds, I understand that you will be introducing Dr. Meink this morning, and I recognize you for your comments.

#### **STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE ROUNDS**

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished colleagues of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

It is my honor to introduce Dr. Troy Meink, nominee to be the Secretary of the Air Force. It is a role which Dr. Meink is imminently qualified for after a lifetime of public service in the field of national security. He's joined by his wife, Jean, son, Troy, daughter, Jenna, and stepbrother, Lieutenant Colonel Troy Merkel.

Dr. Meink hails from Lemmon, South Dakota, which is as close to North Dakota as you can get without stepping over the line. He graduated from my Alma Mater, South Dakota State University (SDSU). That's the Jack Rabbits, by the way. Dr. Meink met his wife, Jean, at SDSU. They were college sweethearts.

An Air Force ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] graduate, he served as a tanker navigator and instructor, and then in a variety of roles working on a host of critical defense and intelligence programs. He is at heart, a true engineer. At SDSU, he designed, and built, and then flew his own airplane, which still hangs on display in the South Dakota Discovery Center in my hometown, the capital of South Dakota, Pierre.

In his minimal spare time, Dr. Meink continues to give back to his community. He has even led high school robotics teams—by the way, the same ones that have gone on to defeat the People's Republic of China (PRC) team in competitions. Now, if he can defeat the PRC with a bunch of high school students, imagine what he's going to be able to do with the world's greatest air and space forces.

Dr. Meink's experience and professionalism are precisely what we need in the Pentagon. His senior roles in the Air Force and National Reconnaissance Office, including as Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force for Space, have prepared him for this assignment.

I urge you to support this very highly qualified nominee to be the next Secretary of the Air Force. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Next, we have a colleague from the House here, Representative Fitzgerald who will be introducing Mr. Duffey. Welcome, sir.

#### **STATEMENT OF HON. SCOTT FITZGERALD, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM WISCONSIN'S 5TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT**

Mr. FITZGERALD. Thank you, Madam Chair, and Ranking Member Reed, and Members of the Committee. I'm honored to introduce my good friend, Michael Duffey, and support his nomination to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment.

I've known Mike and his wife, Morgan, for many years going back to their time in Wisconsin, and Mike is a proud Wisconsinite, and a graduate of Marquette High School, and the University of Wisconsin.

He brings a depth of experience on national security technology and the Federal budget that will make him a tremendous asset as Under Secretary for Acquisition and Sustainment. I'm confident his previous experience serving under 2 Presidents in the White House, and 7 Secretaries of Defense, over 14 years in the Pentagon, will allow him to carry out the President's agenda.

Mike has been a strong advocate for the U.S. military, and I know he will bring his tireless work ethic and integrity to this important position. Thank you very much.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Representative Fitzgerald. You are welcome to depart, or to stay for the hearing, as you see fit. Thank you very much.

Dr. Meink, welcome, sir. You are recognized for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT DR. TROY E. MEINK TO BE SECRETARY OF THE  
AIR FORCE**

Dr. MEINK. Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the chance to appear before you today as a nominee for the Secretary of the Department of the Air Force.

I'm honored and humbled to have this opportunity, especially at such a pivotal time in our Nation. I'd like to thank President Trump for having the faith and confidence in me to submit me for my nomination to this position. I'm joined by my today by my wife, Jean, who is a retired Air Force nurse, and one of the best officers I've known. We met at South Dakota State University in 1985 before class started, and it didn't actually get off to a great start. I was already studying and she thought I was a bit of a nerd. What she didn't know was I was actually studying for my pilot, my private pilot's license.

My focus at that time was Air Force officer, pilot, astronaut. It didn't exactly work out that way, but I've been extremely fortunate to have her by my side since then, and to serve my country in a variety of roles for 35 years. I'd also like to acknowledge my son, Troy, and daughter, Jenna, have both provided the greatest moments of my life.

We have enjoyed many activities. My favorite, perhaps not their favorite was coaching them and their teammates in competitive robotics. I've also had my stepbrother here, Army Lieutenant Colonel Troy Merkel, who also served multiple tours in the Middle East. Finally, I'd like to thank my father, my mother, my sister, and other members of my family who could not be here today.

I'd like to briefly talk about the reasons I'm honored and excited about the opportunity to continue my service as a Secretary of the Department of the Air Force. At my 35 years of service, the first were spent as an Air Force navigator, serving a significant portion of that time overseas.

My first deployment came as I was pulled off of strategic nuclear alert and sent to support conventional operations in the first Gulf

War, where I flew over 100 missions. This rapid shift in mission, the readiness, training, and flexibility required left a lasting impression on me. I believe the flexibility is even more critical today.

Following my Active Duty time, I transitioned to the Air Force Reserves, spending 4 more years supporting the National Air Intelligence Center and the Ballistic and Missile Defense Organization. I also became an Air Force civil servant focusing on building and operating some of the most advanced weapons systems for the Department of Defense and the intelligence community (IC).

It included multiple positions as a researcher, program manager, the Director of Communications Programs and Policy at the Pentagon, Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force for Space, the Assistant Director of National Intelligence for Systems and Resources Analysis, and currently, as a Principal Deputy Director of the National Reconnaissance Office.

A big part of these jobs was understanding the threat that I was building systems to have to support against this quickly evolving threat, and these threats have shaped my perspective. I believe the challenges we faced are threefold.

First, near peer competitors, such as China, are evolving faster than we are in some cases, which will eventually result in the U.S. losing our technological advantage. Second, some competitors such as Russia, are fielding highly escalatory asymmetric capabilities. Third, our Homeland is increasingly put on the defensive from threats such as cyberattack, unmanned aerial systems, and illegal activities at the border, including illicit drug trafficking.

If confirmed, my priority will be to organize training, equip the Department of the Air Force, the head lethality needed to deter all potential aggressors, and if necessary, when in conflict.

First, the Department is building and operating some of the most complex systems ever fielded, both air and space. We need the right number of guardians, but we also need the needed skills, training, support, and focus to deliver and operate those systems.

Second, we need to innovate faster. I spent the last decade increasing competition and expanding the industry base, which has significantly accelerated delivery of capability and at a lower cost. I intend to bring that same drive for innovation to the Department.

Finally, we need to streamline the acquisition and budget process with appropriate fiscal controls. I've helped lead my current organization to 16 clean financial audits, which I believe is a record in the National Security Enterprise.

Throughout my career, I've demonstrated my commitment to the protection and defense of our Nation. If confirmed, I intend to bring what I've learned to this position and to the Department to deliver on the President's goal of achieving peace through strength.

Should I be fortunate enough to get this job, I look forward to working with this committee, this Congress, to ensure the airmen and guardians are equipped to secure the Nation. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Troy Meink follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY DR. TROY MEINK

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Members of this Committee: thank you for the chance to appear before you today as the nominee to

be the Secretary of the Department of the Air Force. I am honored and humbled to have this opportunity, especially at such a pivotal time for our Nation. I'd like to thank President Trump for having the faith and confidence in me to submit my nomination for this position.

I am joined today by my wife, Jean, who is a retired Air Force Nurse, and one of the best officers I have ever known. Jean and I met at South Dakota State University in 1985, 3 days before class started, and it did not get off to a great start. I was already studying and she thought I was a bit of a nerd. What she didn't know, was that I was studying for my pilot's license ... not college. My focus was on becoming an Air Force Officer, pilot, and astronaut. It didn't exactly work out that way, but I have been extremely fortunate to have her by my side, and serve my country in a variety of roles for the past 35 years.

I'd also like to acknowledge my son, Troy, and daughter, Jenna, who have both provided the greatest moments of my life. We have enjoyed many activities, but my favorite—perhaps not theirs—was coaching them and their teammates in competitive robotics.

I also have my stepbrother here, Army Lieutenant Colonel Troy Merkel, who has also served multiple tours in the Middle East. Finally, I want to thank my father, my mother, and the rest of my family that could not be here today.

I'd like to briefly talk about the reasons I'm honored—and excited—about the opportunity to continue my service as the Secretary of the Department of the Air Force. Of my over 35 years of service, the first were spent as an Air Force Navigator, serving a significant portion of that time overseas. My first deployment came as I was pulled off Strategic Nuclear Alert and sent to support conventional operations in the first Gulf War where I flew over 100 missions. This rapid shift in mission, and the readiness, training and flexibility required, left a lasting impression on me. I believe that flexibility is even more critical today.

Following my Active Duty time, I transitioned to the Air Force Reserves spending four more years supporting the National Air Intelligence Center and the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization. I also became an Air Force civil servant, focused on building and operating advanced weapon systems for the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community. This included multiple positions as a researcher and program manager, the Director of Communication Programs and Policy in the Pentagon, Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force for Space, the Assistant Director of National Intelligence for Systems and Resource Analysis and currently as the Principal Deputy Director of the National Reconnaissance Office.

A big part of these jobs was understanding the rapidly evolving threat to the U.S . . . and these threats have shaped my perspective. I believe the challenges we face are three-fold:

- First, near-peer competitors are evolving faster than we are, which will eventually result in the U.S. losing our technological advantage;
- Second, some competitors are fielding highly escalatory asymmetric capabilities;
- And third, our homeland is increasingly put on the defensive from threats such as cyber-attacks, Unmanned Aerial Systems, and illegal activities at our borders including illicit drug trafficking.

If confirmed, my priority will be to organize, train, and equip the Department of the Air Force to have the lethality needed to deter all potential aggressors, and if necessary, win decisively in conflict.

- First, the department is building and operating some of the most complex systems ever fielded in both air and space. We need not only the right number of airmen and guardians, but also the right skills, training, support and focus.
- Second, we need to innovate faster. I've spent the last decade increasing competition and expanding the industrial base, which has significantly accelerated delivery of capability and at a lower cost. I intend to bring that same drive for innovation to the Department.
- Finally, we need to streamline the acquisition and budgeting processes . . . with appropriate fiscal controls. I've helped lead my current organization to 16 consecutive, clean financial statement audits.

Throughout my career, I have demonstrated my commitment to the protection and defense of our Nation. If confirmed, I intend to bring what I have learned to this position and to the Department to deliver on the President's goal of achieving peace through strength. Should I be fortunate enough to get this job, I look forward to working with this Committee and Congress to ensure our airmen and guardians are equipped to secure the Nation.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Dr. Meink.

Mr. Duffey, welcome. You're recognized for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL P. DUFFEY, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT**

Mr. DUFFEY. Thank you, Madam Chair Fischer, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Members of the Committee. Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and for your consideration of my nomination to serve as the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment.

I want to thank Representative Fitzgerald for his generous introduction, and thanking President Trump, Vice President Vance, and Secretary Hegseth for honoring me with this nomination. I'm grateful for and humbled by the trust they have placed in me to lead the Department's efforts to rebuild our military and revitalize our Defense Industrial Base.

I pledge to them and to this Committee that, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to provide much needed military capabilities to our warfighters today, and arm tomorrow's forces with the capabilities they need to prevail in future conflict.

I also want to thank my wife, Morgan, our children, Reynolds and Deans, and my father and mother, Joseph and Patricia for supporting my nomination and my service to the Nation. The love and support you provide me every day inspire me to serve my country to make it better and stronger for you and future generations.

President Trump received a mandate from the American people to make America strong again. Secretary Hegseth has affirmed that his three priorities to achieve this mandate are to restore the warrior ethos to the Pentagon, rebuild our military, and reestablish deterrence.

If confirmed, I would assume responsibility to implement President Trump's mandate and Secretary Hegseth priorities by providing the military with the capabilities and force structure necessary to deter our adversaries, and if necessary, prevail in conflict.

America's ability to protect our interests requires a military force structure with the capability and capacity to deter, and if necessary, to defeat our adversaries. This will require the Department to modernize how it manages the integration of requirements, budgeting, and acquisition processes, aligning incentives to deliver results.

We must deepen our understanding of the strength and vulnerabilities within our Defense Industrial Base, and seek to revitalize through reindustrialization, increased investment, flexible contracting, enhanced workforce recruitment and training, and increased competition.

As our Nation knows from our historic victory in World War II, future conflicts will be won on the factory floor as much as the field of battle. Our ability to deliver the most cutting-edge weapons and replenish equipment and systems lost or expended in battle with speed and proficiency is increasingly a differentiating factor on the battlefield.

Therefore, we must outpace our adversaries and our ability to supply our military with decisive advantage while maintaining a focus on building an industrial based capacity to replenish those

forces as needed. An American Defense Industrial Base that is sufficiently agile and responsive to the emergent needs will act as a powerful deterrent to our adversaries who may be counting on winning a war of attrition in a protracted future conflict.

I thank this Committee, and in particular, Chairman Wicker, for your leadership in advancing acquisition reform initiatives for the Department of Defense through the proposed FoRGED Act. If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with the Committee Members and staff to improve how the Pentagon acquires weapons with a focus on four primary goals.

First, to dramatically accelerate delivery of lethality to our warfighters. Second, driving a laser focus on increasing the speed, performance, and affordability of our acquisition system. Third, strengthening the Defense Industrial Base by reducing barriers to entry, increasing competition, and incentivizing increased investment from new entrants, non-traditionals and traditional vendors alike, and finally, incorporating 21st century business systems and management practices to better manage and acquire cutting edge military capabilities.

If confirmed, I will be accountable to President Trump, Secretary Hegseth, this Committee, the Congress, and the American taxpayers to diligently and urgently invest and resource our military arsenal.

Thank you for your time today and for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Michael P. Duffey follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MICHAEL P. DUFFEY

Good morning, Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your consideration of my nomination to serve as the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment.

I would like to start by thanking President Trump, Vice President Vance, and Secretary Hegseth for honoring me with this nomination. I am grateful for and humbled by the trust they have placed in me to lead the Department's efforts to rebuild our military and revitalize our defense industrial base. I pledge to them and to this Committee that, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to provide much needed military capabilities to our warfighters today, and arm tomorrow's forces with the capabilities they will need to prevail in future conflict.

I also want to thank my wife, Morgan, our children, Reynolds and Deems, and my father and mother, Joseph and Patricia, for supporting my nomination and my service to the Nation. The love and support you provide me every day inspire me to serve my country to make it better and stronger for you and future generations.

President Trump received a mandate from the American people to make America strong again. Secretary Hegseth has affirmed that his three priorities to achieve this mandate are to restore the warrior ethos to the Pentagon, rebuild our military, and reestablish deterrence. If confirmed, I would assume responsibility to implement President Trump's mandate and Secretary Hegseth's priorities by providing the military with the capabilities and force structure necessary to deter our adversaries and, if necessary, prevail in all conflict.

America's ability to protect our interests requires a military force structure with the capability and capacity to deter and, if necessary, defeat our adversaries in all future conflict. This will require the Department to modernize how it manages the integration of requirements, budgeting, and acquisition processes, aligning incentives to deliver results. We must deepen our understanding of the strengths and vulnerabilities within our defense industrial base, and seek to revitalize through re-industrialization, increased investment, flexible contracting, enhanced workforce recruitment and training, and increased competition.

As our Nation knows from our historic victory in World War II, future conflicts will be won on the factory floor as much as on the field of battle. Our ability to de-

liver the most cutting-edge weapons and replenish equipment and systems lost or expended in battle with speed and proficiency is increasingly a differentiating factor on the battlefield. Therefore, we must outpace our adversaries in our ability to supply our military with decisive advantage, while maintaining a focus on building an industrial base capacity to replenish those forces as needed. An American defense industrial base that is sufficiently agile and responsive to emergent needs will act as a powerful deterrent to our adversaries who may be counting on winning a war of attrition in a protracted future conflict.

I thank this Committee, and particularly Chairman Wicker, for your leadership in advancing acquisition reform initiatives for the Department of Defense through the proposed FoRGED Act. If confirmed, I look forward to partnering with the Committee Members and staff to improve how the Pentagon acquires America's weapons, with a focus on four primary goals:

1. Dramatically accelerating delivery of lethality to our warfighters;
2. Driving a laser focus on increasing the speed, performance, and affordability in our acquisition system;
3. Strengthening the defense industrial base by reducing barriers to entry, increasing competition, and incentivizing increased investment from new entrants, non-traditionals, and traditional vendors; and
4. Incorporating 21st century business systems to manage and acquire cutting edge military capabilities.

If confirmed, I will be accountable to President Trump, Secretary Hegseth, this Committee, the Congress, and the American taxpayers to diligently and urgently invest and resource our military arsenal.

Thank you for your time today and for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Duffey.

Mr. Michael, welcome. You are recognized for your opening statement, please.

**STATEMENT OF MR. EMIL G. MICHAEL, TO BE UNDER  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING**

Mr. MICHAEL. Thank you. Senator Fischer, Ranking Member Reed, and the distinguished Members of the Committee, it is the honor of a lifetime to be here today, seeking your advice and consent for me to be the nominee for the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering. I'm grateful to President Trump for entrusting me with his important nomination, and hope to make him, Secretary Hegseth, and the country, proud of the work I do, if confirmed by the Senate.

Nowhere, but in the United States of America, could a first-generation immigrant, whose small Christian family left an increasingly hostile country to religious minorities, like myself, and my family from Egypt, be sitting in front of you today, seeking to join and leading the defense of our Nation. It's an even a greater gift than my 85-year-old father and 77-year-old mother are able to witness this moment after a lifetime of hard work, struggle, and devotion to the goal that my sister and I have a chance at a better life than they did.

I want to thank my friends and family who've come from all over the country; my sister, my in-laws, my business partners, my friends for grade school from who have been with me for 40 years, and helped make me the man I am today. Most importantly, my wife Julie, and our son, Cairo, who's 1 years old—and not sure how long he is going to make it through this hearing, and my daughter, Colette, who's 5 years old. They're really my American Dream, and they support me in everything that makes me who I am.

Part of that American Dream was getting a world-class education from the public school system in New Rochelle, New York, which

wants me into some of the best higher education systems in the world. With much risk for my ability to cover my student loans after those expensive colleges, I became an entrepreneur, where I helped build and grow four companies while coaching dozens of other entrepreneurs to build on new ideas, often against entrenched interests, big companies, and things that were very difficult for them to dream.

The most important company I was part of was Uber. Today, Uber's a verb, it's a noun, and it's an indispensable lifeline for hundreds of millions of people. By embracing technological innovation at speed, Uber reduced drunk driving deaths by half, paid its drivers over \$200 billion, doing the most flexible work they could possibly find, and allowed people of every background to get around safely. We did this by proving to consumers and drivers that there was something better than the unreliable and expensive service that the taxi cartels had profited off for decades.

Just before building Uber, I had the privilege of working as a special assistant for Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates. From him, I learned how to make things happen fast in the Pentagon, notably the MRAP [Mine Resistant Ambush Protected] Program and the Joint IED [Improvised Explosive Devices] defeat programs.

I also learned how to reform the Pentagon as a lead on the Tail-To-Tooth budget initiative, which changed what was an unsustainable trajectory of tail growth at the time, at the expense of our warfighters. After that, I served on the Defense Business Board and brought better ideas for technology practices to the Defense Department.

All of this experience has culminated my desire to serve as the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, which is the Department's Chief Technology Officer. If confirmed, I bring my decades of experience in the technology industry and management of large complex global organizations to ensure that the United States has the most technologically sophisticated defense systems in history.

The central element necessary for all this is innovation at speed. Innovation means increasing the Department's willingness to take risk while having the discipline to stop the projects that are failing. Innovation means focusing our investments in science and technology on only those things that are aligned on our Peace through Strength mission. This must all be done at a pace that is dramatically different than the Defense Department has done in modern times.

Time must be a factor in all of our decisions as we confront an increasingly sophisticated adversary in China, which not only has lower labor costs, but is notorious for intellectual property theft making. Its research and development costs even faster and less expensive than we could have imagined only a decade ago.

If confirmed our work to recast the relationship between DOD and the emerging defense tech sector. The DOD needs to for foster more robust and competitive Defense Industrial Base by providing more realistic requirements, inviting smaller and innovative companies with less burdensome processes, becoming more agile on how and when we grant contracts.

The private sector, too, should bear some more responsibility for the risk of their own failure. A healthy ecosystem will provide for weapons that are better, cheaper, and faster. We've never been at a more critical time for a shift in how we work to catch up where we're behind and increase the gap where we're ahead.

We're living in a much different world than when I was at the Pentagon last in 2011. Every enterprise, public or private, must now be in the technology innovation business. There is no other choice but to do so at full speed. The United States has the technical talent, the money, and the will to ensure war fighting supremacy in every scenario that this new world demands.

I fully believe in President Trump's vision for a golden dome for America. Thank you for your consideration for my nomination. I look forward to hearing your questions about how I can best serve our country, Secretary Hegseth, and President Trump in achieving this mission. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Emil G. Michael follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MR. EMIL MICHAEL

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Members of the Committee. It is the honor of a lifetime to be here today seeking your advice and consent as President Trump's nominee for the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering.

Nowhere but in the United States of America could a first-generation immigrant from Egypt, whose small Christian family left an increasingly oppressive Muslim regime in search of a better life, be sitting in front of you today seeking to join in leading the defense of our Nation and our way of life.

It is an even greater gift from God that my 85-year-old father and 77-year-old mother are able to witness this moment after a lifetime of hard work, struggle, and devotion to the goal that my sister and I have a chance at a better life than they ever had themselves in Egypt.

Most importantly, my wife Julie and our two beautiful children, Collette and Cairo (5 and 1 years old), make me beam with pride as they are a daily reminder of my American Dream.

Part of that American Dream was getting a world-class education from the public school system in the New Rochelle, NY which launched me into some of the best higher education that one could hope for. Much to the chagrin of my parents and with much risk on my ability to cover my student loans, I became an entrepreneur where I helped build and grow four companies while coaching dozens of other entrepreneurs to build, build, build on their ideas.

The most important company I was a part of was Uber. Today, Uber is a verb, a noun, and an indispensable lifeline for hundreds of millions of people. Uber has reduced drunk driving by almost half, paid its drivers over 200 billion dollars doing the most flexible work around and allowed people of color to get rides wherever they need to go. By embracing technological innovation at speed, Uber broke the old taxi cartels that underpaid drivers and denied people the dignity of reliable transportation.

Just before building Uber, I was a White House Fellow working as a Special Assistant for Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. I learned from the best on how to make things happen fast in the Pentagon, notably with the MRAP and Joint IED Defeat programs. I also learned how to reform the Pentagon as a lead on Secretary Gates's "tail-to-tooth" budget-cutting package, which changed what was an unsustainable trajectory of "tail" growth at the time.

After that, I served on the Defense Business Board from 2014 to 2017 and tried to bring ideas for better business and technology practices to the Defense Department.

All of this experience has culminated in my desire to serve as the Department's Chief Technology Officer. If confirmed, I would bring my decades of technology leadership, and management of large and complex organizations to ensure that the United States has the most technologically sophisticated and affordable arsenal of defense systems in the history of the world. In short, technological superiority ensures peace.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering plays a key role in revitalizing the defense industrial base, creating competition, and building a modern and lethal arsenal. As the Department's CTO, the USD(R&E) also helps to secure supply chains, prevent intellectual property theft and cyber-intrusions, and develop President Trump's Golden Dome air and missile defense system to protect our Homeland.

The central element in all of this is technological innovation at speed. Innovation does not stop at the invention of new weapons and defenses but continues to be core to innovating solutions to a broken procurement system and unmanageable internal management systems that drain our dollars. It also means being willing to take bets on things that don't work but having the discipline to stop them with haste. Finally, innovation means focusing our investment in science and technology to those things that are aligned and only aligned with our Peace through Strength mission. But this all must be done at a pace that is dramatically faster than the Department has done in modern times. Time must be a factor in all of our decisions at DOD, not only because time is money, but time is lives with an increasingly sophisticated adversary in China that has lower labor costs and is notorious for its theft of intellectual property that makes its research and development even faster and less expensive.

If confirmed, I would also work to recast the relationship between the DOD and the private sector. It must become one in which the DOD does not require something to be built that will necessarily be 10 years late and 5x over-budget because it is laden with desires from all corners, but also it must become one in which the private sector bears some of the risk of their own failures and delays. We need to revitalize our defense industrial base and create competition, which is the lifeblood of a healthy Democracy and a healthy arsenal that is both modernized and lethal.

We are living in a much different world than when I was last in the Pentagon in 2011. Every enterprise, private or public, must now be in the technology innovation business. There is no other choice but to do so at full speed.

My mission, if confirmed, will be to catch-up and surpass in the areas where we might be behind and to leap forward in new areas that provide the United States with defensive and warfighting supremacy in every scenario that the new world demands.

I look forward to your questions about how I can best serve the country, the Department of Defense, the Secretary, and the President in this mission.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Michael.

Mr. Bass, welcome. You are now recognized for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MR. KEITH M. BASS, TO BE ASSISTANT  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS**

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Chairman Fischer, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I'm deeply honored and humbled to be nominated for the position of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

I'm grateful for the trust placed in me by President Trump and Secretary Hegseth. I want to thank the Members of this Committee. I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet with many of you, to discuss ways to strengthen and enhance the military health system. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing these conversations and strengthening our partnership to advance the mission of military medicine.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce and express my gratitude to my family, both those here with me today and those watching from afar. I'm joined by my twin brother, Kevin, retired Colonel United States Army, and my two daughters, Kate and Erin. Their unwavering support has been instrumental in my journey, and I'm especially grateful for their encouragement. I also want to recognize my wife, Martha, and my parents, who cannot be here, but are watching virtually.

I've had the honor and privilege of retiring from the United States Navy after 20 years of Active Duty service. Throughout my enlisted and officer career, I've served aboard ships in the military, medical treatment facilities (MTFs), both domestic and overseas at the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Central Intelligence Agency, and the White House.

After retiring from the military, I transitioned into civilian leadership roles, serving as a senior vice-president for a virtual health technology company, and currently, as a medical center director at the VA Healthcare Center.

Throughout my career, I've supported humanitarian missions, disaster response efforts, theater, medical operations, and casualty evacuations. I've had the privilege and honor of serving alongside dedicated military and civilian professionals who devote their lives to sustaining the readiness of our forces. I cannot be more proud to call them colleagues and friends.

The military health system is a global leader in delivering world-class care, unmatched in excellence, and second to none. I'm excited about the future of military medicine and the opportunity to drive innovation and improve patient outcomes. By continuing to focus on modernization, technology, research, care delivery, we can strengthen our operational readiness and set new standards in casualty care.

We must also acknowledge the complex and evolving challenges facing our healthcare. Ensuring the readiness of our forces, recruiting and retaining medical personnel, and adapting to rapid technological advancements are all pressing issues that require strategic action. If confirmed, my highest priority will be ensuring the medical readiness of our forces, stabilizing the military health system to provide advanced care possible, both on and off the battlefield.

A strong military health system is the cornerstone of our national defense strategy, and maintaining a medically ready force requires integrated, innovative, and adaptive healthcare system. If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress, military leaders, healthcare professionals, and our community partners to ensure force readiness. Together we can build a healthcare system that not only meets today's needs, but also anticipates and adapts to the challenges of tomorrow.

I look forward to talking with you today, and welcome any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Keith M. Bass follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MR. KEITH M. BASS

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today.

I am deeply honored and humbled to be nominated for the position of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. I am grateful for the trust placed in me by President Trump and Secretary Hegseth.

I want to thank the Members of this Committee. I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet with many of you to discuss ways to strengthen and enhance the Military Health System. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing these conversations and strengthening our partnership to advance the mission of military medicine.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce and express my gratitude to my family, both those here with me today and those watching from afar. I am joined by my twin brother Kevin (Retired, COL, USA) and my two daughters, Kate and Erin.

Their unwavering support has been instrumental in my journey, and I am especially grateful for their encouragement. I want to also recognize my wife, Martha and my parents, who could not be here today, but are watching virtually.

I had the honor and privilege of retiring from the United States Navy after 20 years of Active Duty service. Throughout my enlisted and officer career, I served aboard ships, in Military Medical Treatment Facilities both domestically and overseas, at the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the White House. After retiring from the military, I transitioned into civilian healthcare leadership roles, serving as Senior Vice President for a virtual health technology company and, currently, as a medical center director with the Veterans Health Administration.

Throughout my career, I have supported humanitarian missions, disaster response efforts, theater medical operations, and casualty evacuations. I have had the privilege of serving alongside dedicated military and civilian professionals who devote their lives to sustaining the readiness of our forces. I could not be more proud to call them colleagues and friends.

The Military Health System is a global leader in delivering world-class care, unmatched in excellence and second to none. I am excited about the future of military medicine and the opportunity to drive innovation and improve patient outcomes. By continuing to focus on modernization, technology, research, and care delivery, we can strengthen operational readiness and set new standards in casualty care.

However, we must also acknowledge the complex and evolving challenges facing military healthcare. Ensuring the readiness of our forces, recruiting and retaining medical personnel, and adapting to rapid technological advancements are all pressing issues that require strategic action.

If confirmed, my highest priority will be ensuring the medical readiness of our forces and stabilizing the Military Health System to provide the most advanced care possible, both on and off the battlefield. A strong Military Health System is a cornerstone of our national defense strategy, and maintaining a medically ready force requires an integrated, innovative, and adaptable healthcare system.

If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress, military leaders, healthcare professionals, and our community partners to ensure force readiness. Together, we can build a healthcare system that not only meets today's needs but also anticipates and adapts to the challenges of tomorrow.

I look forward to talking with you today and welcome any questions you may have.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Bass.

I will now ask all of you a series of standard questions this committee poses to all civilian nominees. Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[Witnesses answer in the negative.]

Senator FISCHER. Exercising our legislative and oversight responsibilities makes it important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress, receive testimony, briefings, reports, records, and other information from the executive branch on a timely basis.

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify before this Committee when requested?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator FISCHER. 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 request order regarding the basis for any good faith, delay, or denial in providing such records?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

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

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. We will now begin with our first round of questions, and I will start. These are 5-minute rounds.

Having a safe, effective, and reliable and credible nuclear deterrent is the cornerstone of our national defense. Currently, each leg of our nuclear triad is undergoing a generational recapitalization to better align with the projected threat. The Department of the Air Force is responsible for two of the three legs; the land-based ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles], and our bomber fleet.

Dr. Meink, in your answers to the Committee's advanced policy questions, you stated that, "The ground leg of the nuclear triad, Minuteman III, and over time, Sentinel, are foundational to strategic deterrence and defense of the Homeland." I agree with that. I also believe that we have an opportunity following an analysis done during the Nunn-McCurdy breach to incorporate lessons learned and build a stronger, more enduring Sentinel program than was originally proposed.

Dr. Meink, if confirmed, will you commit to utilizing all available tools to accelerate Sentinel in placement and ensure that our Nation's ICBM capability does move forward?

Dr. MEINK. Thank you, Senator. If confirmed, I will do so. And I do appreciate the one-on-one conversation we had on this topic. I'm looking forward to diving into the results of the number security and then also, obviously, work in the B-21 and the other activities from a nuclear perspective, the Department supports.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you.

Mr. Duffey, if confirmed as Under Secretary of Acquisition and Sustainment, you will oversee all nuclear modernization efforts, and serve as Chair of the Nuclear Weapons Council. Can you provide us with a short summary of your views on why we need such a strong nuclear deterrent?

Mr. DUFFEY. Madam Chair, thank you for the question, and yes, I look forward, if confirmed, to assisting leading the Department in the oversight of the nuclear modernization program. Nuclear modernization, as you mentioned, is the backbone of our strategic deterrent, and ensuring that we have a modern, capable nuclear enterprise that not only includes the B-21, which is a successful acquisition program by all accounts, but the *Columbia*-class submarine, and the Sentinel nuclear ICBM, are critical as chair of the Nuclear Weapons Council.

I look forward to the partnership with the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), working with this Committee, to ensure that we maintain the highest quality systems that not only deliver the weapons, but the nuclear command and control system

that would be required for a safe and secure deployment, if necessary. I think it's absolutely critical that we ensure that we have accelerated acquisition of those capabilities. Thank you.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you.

Would you agree that our triad along with "NC3, the deterrent" it provides truly is the priority of the Department, and that it underpins all of our strategic planning?

Mr. DUFFEY. I absolutely agree with that. Yes, ma'am.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you.

Dr. Meink, I believe we're finally on a better path when it comes to space programs, and I'm impressed by what our guardians have achieved over the last several years. But the Space Force is still a young organization, and there are likely still growing pains ahead. I am encouraged that the President nominated someone for this program with deep expertise in the space programs.

Dr. Meink, what's your vision for how the Space Force should grow and how it should evolve as a service?

Dr. MEINK. Thank you for the question, Senator. Yes, I've been fortunate enough to work space systems both on the Air Force side, which then became the Space Force side, as well as from the IC side.

Space is critical. This is actually one of the areas that we're most challenged, I believe. From the rapidly evolving threat from China and others. Both the direct threat to our systems as well as the threat, those systems pose to our operations across the Department, in general.

I think the key to both acquisition and operations is making sure you have the best talented workforce. These are some of the most complicated systems, and if the U.S. is going to maintain our advantage, which we need to do in space, we need to make sure we have the right workforce.

The Space Force's in the process of growing. We'll support that activity to make sure we have the right numbers and the right skillset, and then make sure that the acquisitions themselves are delivering, and that they're getting into operation.

Senator FISCHER. Can you give me a quick example of what new capabilities you think Space Force should be focusing on to acquire? Just quick example.

Dr. MEINK. I think some of the space control and counter space systems are critical. Senator, can't dive into too many of the details, but that is probably the area that we are being most stressed from a threat perspective.

Senator FISCHER. Okay. Thank you. Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Mr. Duffey, in 2019, you played a central role in the withholding of \$250 million in desperately needed Ukrainian assistance, which passed Congress with bipartisan support. Indeed, President Trump was impeached for his decisions. to withhold the money. Your actions to facilitate the withholding of this aid that had been authorized and appropriated by your Congress, certainly contravened the direction of this body and the law.

Can you assure us that you'll follow the law without reservation rather than the wishes of the President or the Secretary?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes, Senator. I provide that assurance. If I am confirmed, I would follow the law.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Dr. Meink, as you know, launch operations at Cape Canaveral Space Force Base have become highly constrained due to the new class of ultra heavy lift rockets and the amount of standoff distance that they require.

If confirmed, will you review what options are available to alleviate this constraint, which is hindering competition in this particular area, and report back as quickly as possible to the Committee? I think one of the great achievements of the last few years is the privatization of space launches, and the competitive model is a good one. We'd like to see that maintained.

Dr. MEINK. Senator, I'd be happy to. That is something in my current job we worked and are concerned about. One of the phrases I like to say sometimes is this is kind of a good problem to have. You know, historically, we had very limited access to space launch that has grown across many, many companies in the U.S., but that has also led to some challenges.

As you just articulated, it's getting very busy, very crowded, and some of these larger launch vehicles do drive different concerns than maybe we had to address in the past. So, yes, Senator, I think it's that capability is extremely important for us to maintain our advantage in space. I think to some degree what we're doing across the board in launch gives the U.S. asymmetric advantage. But we do need to make sure that we have the proper launch infrastructure, the proper space really to continue operations, and allow that both national security and commercial industry to grow.

Senator REED. You'll get back to us as quickly as possible with the—

Dr. MEINK. Yes, Senator, I will.

Senator REED. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Michael, one of the key advantages we have in our industrial base is our technical workforce within the military, including our acquisition professionals, our test and evaluation community, our STEM personnel, our laboratories. They're vital. In fact, I think we'll find that that is going to be the pathway to more efficiency and more productivity as we enhance this workforce.

But we're now in a situation where many of these individuals are being dismissed without any cause. They're being encouraged to leave, and many of them have the skills to walk out the door and get a lot more money in the private sector. What can and will you do to reverse this trend, to buildup on our workforce rather than to haphazardly dismiss it?

Mr. MICHAEL. Ranking Member Reed, I think that we all agree that technological innovation is the way forward for the Defense Department and almost every dimension. We have some story labs like DARPA and other places that ought to be fortified as opposed to degraded in any way.

I think part of that is ensuring that it remains an honored profession, because people join these labs and these affiliated scientific organizations with the DOD because they care about the mission. We have to honor that, and I think we would, can attract more people and retain people if we celebrate their accomplishments more.

Also, if we focus them on missions that are going to be important and realized. That's why I mentioned, I think focusing them on those missions and honoring their successes will attract and retain more of them. I've done that in the private industry for decades, really focusing on getting engineers, keeping them, rewarding them to produce great things. That's what I intend to do in this role if confirmed.

Senator REED. Well, that's encouraging. Again, though, you're looking at a situation now where people have been dismissed, not based on their talents, but they earn a pro rata status, and they can be dismissed. I hope you can reverse that policy. Thank you.

My time is expiring. Mr. Bass, I'll have a question for the record. Thank you.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Senator Reed. Senator Cotton, you are recognized.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

Dr. Meink, I want to return to Senator Fischer's line of questioning about nuclear modernization. The Air Force is responsible for two of the three legs of the nuclear triad, as she said. Sometimes the funding for that which is known as the "pass through" counts against, you might say, the top line for the Air Force and internal budget battles.

I personally worry that Air Force can't execute all of its tasks when it comes to its traditional, conventional task, while also executing nuclear modernization of our missiles and our long-range bombers. Do you agree that we need to take a new look at the top line for the Air Force, and especially to account for that nuclear pass through to ensure that Air Force has the budget necessary to perform all of its vital tasks?

Dr. MEINK. Yes. Senator, thank you for the question, and thanks for the opportunity to talk a little bit offline. The Air Force is kind of a unique position almost in its history. We are in the process of modernizing pretty much across all the five core mission areas. The tri nuclear deterrence is a huge part of that.

As you just kind of mentioned, those systems are pretty expensive. One of the first things I plan to do is take a holistic look at all the modernization and all the readiness bills that we have coming. Then, I will put together and advocate for what resources I think are necessary to execute all of those missions. Then, working both within the administration and with Congress, which I've found throughout my time working national security, a good relationship with Congress was critical.

So, if confirmed, I'll be back here walking through what I think we need to do.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

I'm sure, in the internal budget battle, as you remind everyone, it's not just my top line. I've got this big, big slug of nuclear modernization here as well.

Dr. MEINK. Yes, Senator. There are a couple slugs in there that—

Senator COTTON. Okay. Thank you. Another thing that worries me is retaining our troops, especially in the Air Force, retaining fighter pilots. We're nearly 1,800 pilots short. I believe, these days, for every 4 jobs requiring a fighter pilot, we just fill 3 of them. I

have my thoughts on some of the factors driving this, in part, due to some round tables that Senator King and I have held over the years with pilots.

For instance, I think we can always probably do a little bit better job of paying our pilots, but I don't think you're ever going to pay them enough compared to what commercial airlines will pay them or private companies. People join the Air Force to fly fighter pilots because they want to fly high-performance jets in defense of our Nation.

We need to do a better job of getting them more time in the cockpit training here than in down range. I think it's one big factor. There are other factors as well. But could you give me your thoughts on that? Also, just a commitment that you're going to look carefully at that.

Dr. MEINK. Yes, I'll commit. I'm going to look carefully at that. Senator, I think your discussion about, I see that as kind of a quality of life pay that only goes so far. We need to make sure, not just with pilots, but across our highly skilled areas within our workforce, that they have the opportunity to do what they've been trained, what they love to do. I think that could be a bigger impact on maintaining some of these highly technical skill sets like pilots and others, letting them do what they were trained to do.

Yes, I've been around since I was a navigator. We've always struggled with maintaining pilot levels. It is much larger than just the funding. Senator, not to necessarily ask something of you, but if you have other opinions, if I'm confirmed, I'd love to sit down and talk to you about it.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. Just one more question for you, Dr. Meink. Ebbing Air International Guard Base and Fort Smith is now the home of the international fighter training mission for the F-35. It's going to grow from 4 aircraft today to 48 fighter aircraft in the next 3 years. That's twice as fast as the normal for standard F-35 mission.

The Air Force has worked well with our State, and local partners, and Senator Boozman's office, Congressman Womack's office, and mine. Can I get your commitment that will continue to work well as we go through this very fast, but so far, a very successful bed down to ensure that Ebbing has the resources it needs?

Dr. MEINK. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator COTTON. Mr. Bass, first off, I want to apologize, and I missed our meeting yesterday. I hate to stand up a Wonder Boy from Arkansas Tech University right across the river from Darnell, Arkansas. But glad to see you today, and congratulations on your nomination. I continue to hear that the MHS [Military Health System] Genesis program is causing problems for recruiting and converting recruits into new troopers. Not just airmen, but soldiers, sailors, marines and so forth.

Obviously, we want to work efficiently with medical records, and we don't want to bring in people who are going to be washed out because of serious medical conditions 6 months after basic training. But we've discovered a lot of things, I think, in past days.

Let's just be honest, your recruiter would've told you to live out at MEPS [Military Entrance Processing Station] when you went there. You know that you had a broken arm when you played jun-

ior high football and then went on to play four more years of senior high football. It gets recorded now, and you have to go through a bunch of rigamarole. In the meantime, you get a better job doing something else.

Can you take a look at how Genesis is operating to make sure that we catch the serious problems we need to without deterring and delaying young men and women who are eager to sign up and serve in our military?

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Senator. Go Razorbacks. I will commit to taking a look at the assess standards. You know, a good problem to have is that we have too much information in our medical health record. You know, we'll, we'll take that. But we also need to take a look at our session policies. I commit to working that and working with your office.

Senator COTTON. Thank you.

Mr. BASS. Yes, sir.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Shaheen, you are recognized.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Madam Chair, and congratulations to each of our nominees and your families. Welcome this morning. Thank you for your willingness to continue to serve the country.

Mr. Bass, I want to followup on a concern that I have based on your record at the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. I've been very concerned about directed energy attacks on our servicemembers, our diplomats, and our intelligence community abroad. I have personally interviewed and worked with a number of those victims over the years from the time of the first attacks in China and Cuba.

The Department of Defense has been offering critical care at Walter Reed for the victims across the interagency. However, many in the intelligence community, I think, are doing a disservice to these victims by continuing to deny that this is a real issue, and to fail to look for attribution for who's responsible.

Now, I understand that there are reports from your time at the CIA that suggest you didn't take seriously the reports of those anomalous health incidents. Can you speak to why you were skeptical, and what your position would be if you were confirmed for this new role?

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Senator, and thank you for your commitment to this effort. I reject the premise that I did not take AHI [Anomalous Health Incidents] seriously. All individuals that are affected by AHI, regardless, should be treated with dignity and respect, and they should be afforded healthcare.

The issue that we had to resolve was these individuals wanted to go to Walter Reed. We needed to really streamline the process for getting secretary designee because, at that time, the processes and the policies were not in place to get them to the NICOE [The National Intrepid Center of Excellence]. I think we were using NIH [National Institutes of Health] at the time. So, we pulled together all the subject matter experts.

My understanding now is that DOD has significantly expedited that process. These individuals, not just at the agency, ma'am, it

was at all the Federal agencies, we wanted to make sure these individuals got the healthcare that they deserve regardless of source.

Whether we knew what the source was or not, they should have gotten healthcare. We worked to do that. I think given time, we did get those individuals into the healthcare they deserve.

Senator SHAHEEN. Do you commit that, if confirmed, the Defense Health Agency will continue to play a critical role in care and treatment for those who have been victims of AHI.

Mr. BASS. Senator, 100 percent, I commit to that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

I'd like to ask the other three of you, who I'm sorry, I missed the opening statements that everybody provided, and the questions that I've heard, you've all talked about the need for additional resources at the Department level. How do you square that with the current commitment of this Administration and Secretary Hegseth to reduce funding for the Department of Defense by 8 percent a year over the next 5 years? Mr. Duffey?

Mr. DUFFEY. Senator, thank you for the question. I believe that the media reporting on that is inaccurate. I do not believe that it's Secretary's intent to cut the budget 8 percent, but rather he directed the services to relook at a budget that had been prepared by the prior Administration with a focus on 8 percent of the resources of that prior budget, and reallocate that toward this Administration's priorities.

Senator SHAHEEN. Can you tell this Committee that if you disagree with the directive for the Secretary of Defense or the Administration about what they tell you should do with our nuclear program, that if you think it's incorrect, and that it will affect the ability of that program to operate successfully in the future, that you would say that to them and share that standup to those people directing you to do something that you think you should not be doing?

Mr. DUFFEY. Well, Senator, I would take my responsibility seriously to advocate for the resources that I believe are required to resource our forces with the capabilities they need in order to prevail in conflict.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Dr. Meink, on the resource question?

Dr. MEINK. Absolutely, Senator. I will always advocate for the resources. I think I need to meet the requirements that I've been given, and I've had a bit of a history of doing that. I will continue to do that, Senator.

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Michael?

Mr. MICHAEL. Senator Shaheen, of course. I think the first thing a new leader does when they come into an organization is look at what their mission is and if they have the resources to accomplish it or not. Every new administration gets their own agenda. That would be one of the first order of business when you get into a job like this; would be to assess that and make sure that you have the right resources.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. [Presiding.] Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen. Senator Kramer.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just on that last point, I think what you're going to find out is you don't have enough resources, but that's just my pre-judgment. I think it's great, Dr. Meink, that you are surrounded by the research and development guy, and the acquisition guy, and you're all talking about modernization. That's what I want to talk about. But first, I want to know, in Lemmon, South Dakota, "as close to North Dakota as you can possibly be," to quote my colleague from South Dakota, was your area code 605 or 701? Because Lemon is known to have both.

Dr. MEINK. Yes, it's not just close. Actually, part of the town is in North Dakota. I was 605, so.

Senator CRAMER. That's fine.

Dr. Meink, it gets harder from there. I'm told that the Air Force is considering canceling solicitations for this transport layer on SDA's [Space Development Agency] Tranche 2 and 3, and instead using Star Shield, which is of course, an existing SpaceX capability.

One of the specific purposes of SDA as per the founding document is to, "Expand our space war fighting capability, and foster growth in the U.S. space, industrial base." I'm told that cutting these bids for these transport layers means maybe 8 or more small mid-size companies would not be allowed to bid. Is this a good idea? I mean, do you think cutting opportunities like this could hurt the innovators in the industrial base and the potential going forward?

Dr. MEINK. Senator, thanks for that question. You know, one of the things that I pushed for, particularly over the last 10 years is expand competition and expand the industry base. That ends up almost always with the best result, both from a capability and cost to the Government. I'm not familiar with those discussions going on within the Pentagon. If confirmed, I look forward to diving into that and assessing where they're going and what they're recommending. But I've not seen those recommendations at this point.

Senator CRAMER. Well, I look forward to that. I look forward to digging into that and finding out the answers. Hopefully changing course if that is, in fact, the case going on with SDA. The founding document, which was written in March 2019, said, "We cannot match the pace our adversaries are setting if we remain bound by legacy methods and culture."

I have been told so many times by people seeking and that have positions like you're all seeking that that's their commitment to, and I have yet to really see anybody put that to practice. So, as you were a member of NRO at the time, I believe, and were probably part of that culture, why do you think the statement was needed in 2019? Do you think the statement is relevant today? If not, why?

Dr. MEINK. Senator, I think that sort of thinking is always required, right? We always have to look at how we're operating, how we're executing. As technology changes, as different threats change, we have to be flexible and adaptable enough.

We have made, I believe, significant improvements in how we are acquiring systems. I would argue that at that point in time, there were probably no programs that were moving faster than the Chinese. That is not the case now. But we still have a long way to give, Senator, and I think you pointed a couple of those out.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you for that. I think, well, while I have time, I'm going to switch over to you, Mr. Bass, and talk about something that's really near and dear to my heart.

Coming from a rural State, very rural area with some really important bases in our country, and our world, and certainly to me. I championed some legislation in the NDAA, the 2025 NDAA, about rural healthcare and access. Specifically, to mental health services.

But I was told that Defense Health Agency was against it. So, the Committee staff wouldn't put it in the bill without a vote of the Members. I brought the amendment to the Committee, it passed on a voice vote. Here's the point. It has to do with TRICARE reimbursement for healthcare services that don't meet the very specific accreditation. Not a better accreditation, just an accreditation.

That greatly reduces access to healthcare, to mental healthcare. The reason this became important to me is because I know of two airmen who sought mental health care, grand folks, and were denied by TRICARE, who are no longer with us because they ultimately chose to take their own lives all because of this one accreditation.

I don't know what would've happened had they been able to get the care that was available to them. But the bill that we passed, that's part of the NDAA. It basically says if access in the State fails to meet standards for more than 12 months consecutive, then we have to look at something different.

Now it's under review. The first part of the bill is a 1-year review. My experience, and my experience is far too often that in a year we have to ask somebody where the review is, and they'll try to get it to us in 4 months. Would you just please, please, please, please commit to the men and women of the military that we'll look into this right away. That, in that a year, from the enactment of the law, I don't have to wait 4 more months for the conclusion?

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Senator, and the mental health access for our servicemembers and our Total Force has to be a priority. I will commit to working with you on that.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you for that.

Mr. BASS. Yes, sir.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Duffey, it's appropriate that you and Dr. Meink are sitting together because I think there's such a close correlation between the work that you're doing. Technology wins wars. The side that has the newer technology generally prevails. Genghis Khan and the stirrup, the longbow at the Battle of Agincourt, the tank in World War I, the atomic weapon in World War II.

My concern is that we have missed two of the major technologies of the 21st century. This isn't a criticism of the current Administration. It goes back probably 10 or 15 years; hypersonics and directed energy. We've got to catch up, and the budget, the prior Administration cut the budget for directed energy in half, which to me just doesn't make sense. We're spending \$2 or \$3 million per missile to knock those \$20,000 drones out in the Red Sea. Directed energy certainly ought to be an answer.

I know that there's work going on, but it should be accelerated. My request is that you try to think ahead and think about acquiring the next technology, not just what we've always done. My most hated words in the English language is, "We've never done it that way before." I hope you'll subscribe to a philosophy of trying to look to the future. Your thoughts?

Mr. DUFFEY. Senator, thank you for the question. I'm thrilled to not only be sitting next to Dr. Meink, but Mr. Michael, who will be at the cutting edge of the next generation of technologies. I look forward to a partnership with both these gentlemen on how do we advance that technology? How do we leapfrog our adversaries' capabilities there? Then I see my responsibility is how do we accelerate getting that hand in the hands of the warfighter?

Senator KING. One way to do that is smaller businesses. We've had testimony to this Committee by smaller businesses that they've just given up on the Pentagon acquisition process. Too complex, too much red tape, too long. I just hope that in your Administration, you don't turn away from fostering small businesses where a lot of the innovation takes place.

Mr. DUFFEY. I agree with that, Senator, and I'd like to recognize and appreciate the leadership's Chairman Wicker's provided in the FoRGE Act, which I think takes a bold step of proposing the rescission of 285 provisions of law that are no longer relevant. I think that's a great step forward. How do we remove those burdens that we place on business that want to deliver value to the Pentagon?

Senator KING. I appreciate that.

Mr. Michael, research is crucial. Same argument that I just made about the importance of new technology. I hope we don't lose touch with our universities, which are huge assets in terms of research, as well as the private sector research capability. Is it your intention to maintain support for research across the board, whether it's private sector, government, or university?

Mr. MICHAEL. Certainly it is Senator. It's obvious to me, and I'll give you an example. The AI industry, the private sector, is investing hundreds of billions of dollars per year in that which dwarfs orders of magnitude, the amount we're spending in DOD. We should be leveraging that in some way. Certainly, in the university settings, they're also innovating in quantum computing and lots of other areas that we need to be drawing from, and pulling in faster into the DOD and into Mr. Duffey's acquisition programs, so that we can get those things in sooner from both of those types of organizations.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Mr. Bass, I'm running short of time, but I want to be sure that one of your priorities is brain health. The signature issue from the war on terror has been problems with blast over pressure and brain health long-term effects. I hope that's something you'll pay significant attention to.

There are ongoing studies in the Department, but I want to also emphasize that implementation of the results of those studies is important. I hope that you'll commit to me that brain health is something that you'll attend to in this position. I think it's one of the most important maladies affecting our troops.

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Senator, for your commitment to this issue. DOD is a leader in this space, and I will commit to you that we will continue to look at ways and devote research to this issue and making sure that we continue to make progress.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Just in a few seconds, none is so devout as the convert. I was not enthusiastic about the creation of the Space Force under the leadership of Senator Cramer. I now admit I was wrong. I used AI a few minutes ago to determine that this budget of the Space Force is 3.5 percent of the total budget of the Defense Department.

Given the role of space in any future conflict, Dr. Meink, I think the Space Force deserves greater resources and greater attention. The first day or two of any future conflict is going to take place in space.

Dr. MEINK. Yes, Senator, I believe that you are correct; that space is going to be one of the determining factors, either from a deterrence perspective because if it can't be affected, it's going to be a deterrent to the adversary. So, we definitely need to get that right.

The Space Force budget has been, to my understanding, has been growing significantly since it was founded five or so years ago. I will continue to advocate for the resources. I think the Department, in general, given the threatened environment in the INDO-PACOM theater, is going to play a very important role in both air and space. I will advocate for the resources to do that.

Senator KING. Well, thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Well said by both of you. Thank you, Senator King. Senator BUDD.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations to each and every one of you for your nominations and your willingness to serve. It's much appreciated. Thanks to your families for being here.

Dr. Meink, I enjoyed our conversation a couple of weeks ago. You know, the Air Force announced that Seymour Johnson Air Force Base will be one of Air Force's first deployable combat wings ready for deployment in fiscal year 2027. So, what's your understanding and view of the deployable combat wing concept?

Dr. MEINK. Senator, thanks for the question, and thanks for our discussion. I apologize we got a little off topic on some of those things, but I appreciate the time. My understanding is fairly limited with the reorganization and the refocus of how they're going to deploy their wings. But I am aware they're in the process of attempting to transition to that kind of concept.

I think it holds promise, and if confirmed, that is one of the areas I'm going to take a look at. My understanding is that the Secretary will likely ask me to take a look at it, if I'm confirmed.

Senator BUDD. Look forward to working together in that regard.

Continuing on in a January op-ed, General Allvin, he highlighted that the Air Force fleet is the smallest and oldest that it's ever been, sighting in part that, "We are blocked from divesting aircraft and programs, ill-suited for today's threat environment." Dr. Meink, in your opinion, is the F-15 E Strike Eagle ill-suited for today's threat environment?

Dr. MEINK. First off, the F-15s, it's kind of my favorite airplane. An F-15 air cap came to my rescue when I was in a tanker in the first Gulf War, and ran off a couple of Iraqi fighters. So, I'm probably a little bit conflicted when it comes to the F-15. But is it going to be able to operate in the highest threat environments? No. Does it have value? Yes.

I think the question going forward will be; how long do we continue, and how do we best utilize the value from the fourth-generation fighters? But I think it definitely has value today. Not in all environments, but it definitely has value today, Senator.

Senator BUDD. Thank you.

More broadly, what are your thoughts on General Allvin's comments about the size and age of the Air Force fleet? Is our fleet, particularly our amount of tactical fighters, is it too small?

Dr. MEINK. Senator, the thing I can speak to for sure is that the fleet is aging. The 30-plus years on average. Some of the platforms, some of the critical platforms are significantly older than that.

When I was a navigator, I had never flown a KC-135 that was younger than me. They're still flying today. One of the mainline air refueling platforms that the Department has. So, they're definitely getting old. Still very capable platform, but they're definitely aging.

With respect to the exact numbers, Senator, I have not seen, and I'm looking forward to seeing the detailed analysis that went into the projections on NGAD [Next Generation Air Dominance] and the other systems. My sense though is it's probably too small both on the fighter and the bomber side of the house.

Senator BUDD. Thank you for that.

Mr. Michael and Mr. Duffey, American deterrence relies on maintaining military technological edge over our adversaries. China's strategy to blunt to that edge through espionage, intellectual property theft, and rapid acquisition is a threat that must be addressed.

So, if confirmed, you both would play a major role in ensuring that American its allies have the tools needed to prevail in war, while ensuring that critical new technology stays out of unfriendly hands. So, Mr. Michael, as we develop and scale new technology, including NGAD, or next generation air dominance, AI, and quantum. How will you act to ensure that the security of these American innovations and their IP [intellectual property] remain in our hands?

Mr. MICHAEL. That is one of the most important things that I'll have to work on. Because if you look at what's happened with the Chinese capabilities with Salt Typhoon, and with infiltration into some of the university programs, and into our systems. That means that that adversary can catch up without 80 percent of the cost because they could innovate on top of our 80 percent investment. That's quite a bit of advantage they get.

So, protecting against their ability to steal our intellectual property, our trade secrets, and us not being reliant on their supply chains are two things that we have to do in combination with one another to ensure that when we're superior, we stay superior.

Senator BUDD. Thank you.

Along those lines, Mr. Duffey, how will you ensure that our acquisition system can keep up with the rate of technology and innovation in the world?

Mr. DUFFEY. Well, thank you for the question, Senator. It is critical that we have a robust defense industrial base that can provide security to protect our intellectual property, but has the robustness to ensure that we're delivering the most cutting-edge capability to our forces. It would be my commitment, if confirmed, into the job to explore those barriers that are preventing new entrants and private capital from entering the defense industrial base to accelerate the production capacity of our defense industrial base, and to create new innovation to get it in the hands of the warfighter.

Senator BUDD. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Budd.

I hope all policymakers, House and Senate, and the executive branch, and private sector are listening to the valuable testimony. Let me just followup, if I might, Senator Hirono, before I recognize you. Dr. Meink, you said the number of years into the future that the F-15 might be valuable or useful is a question. Do you have an opinion about that? Could you followup on that question that Senator Budd asked?

Dr. MEINK. Senator, thanks for the question, and I appreciate the opportunity we had to speak offline. I haven't seen all the detailed results of the analysis that's going on, or that has gone on in support of the NGAD and other decisions. I don't have the latest information.

I would say, though, that the fourth-generation fighters are still in many environments going to be effective. I think at some point in time, it becomes a cost-benefit analysis as we bring on additional fifth-, and potentially, sixth-generation fighters. So, I can't speak to the detail, Senator, but I will look into it, and I will be happy to come down and brief the Hill on what I find.

Chairman WICKER. That's a valuable answer in itself. Thank you very much. Senator Hirono, you are recognized.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to each of you.

As part of my effort to focus on the ensuring the fitness of all nominees who come before any of my committees, I ask the following two initial questions. We'll start with Mr. Duffey, and go right down the line. First question, 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. DUFFEY. Never.

Senator HIRONO. Let's go down the line.

Dr. MEINK. No, Senator.

Mr. MICHAEL. No, Senator.

Mr. BASS. No.

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

Mr. DUFFEY. No.

Dr. MEINK. No, Senator.

Mr. MICHAEL. No.

Mr. BASS. No.

Senator HIRONO. This is the first hearing of this Committee since the security breach involving Signal, and involving their attack on Yemen. So, I am going to ask each of you yes or no questions. Again, we'll start with Mr. Duffey. Based on your backgrounds, each of you has had a security clearance. Yes, or no?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes.

Dr. MEINK. Yes, Senator, I have a clearance.

Mr. MICHAEL. I didn't hear you say do I have or have I had?

Senator HIRONO. Have you had, if you have historic—

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes.

Senator HIRONO. Yes. So, you know what a security clearance is?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes, Senator,

Senator HIRONO. Go ahead, and each of you would agree that protecting classified information is important?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes.

Dr. MEINK. Yes, Senator.

Mr. MICHAEL. It's obligatory.

Senator HIRONO. It's what?

Mr. MICHAEL. Obligatory.

Senator HIRONO. Yes. It's the law. Have any of you discussed classified information on an unclassified device or medium?

Mr. DUFFEY. No.

Dr. MEINK. No, Senator.

Mr. MICHAEL. No.

Mr. BASS. No, Senator.

Senator HIRONO. I'm glad that all of you have answered no, because that's pretty obvious. If you admitted that you did not follow the law, that you will be admitting to committing a Federal crime.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask unanimous consent that the record of this hearing include the March 26th Atlantic article, which includes all of the Signal chat attack plans for the strikes on Yemen to be included in the record of this hearing.

Chairman WICKER. It is their objection. Without objection, it is so ordered.

[The information referred to follows:]

Please see Appendix A at the end of this transcript.

Senator HIRONO. I also joined those of my colleagues who are calling for an investigation, sooner the better. I think we need to counter the tendency of this Administration to want to sweep everything under the rug whenever things get uncomfortable for them.

I have a question for Dr. Meink. Joint basing construct between the Air Force and Navy at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam has led to extensive infrastructure and military construction delays, including at the Hickam Air Force Base or airfield. These delays have impacted the military's readiness in the Pacific and warfighter quality of life. Will you commit to working with my office to resolve these readiness gaps and quality of life challenges, Dr. Meink?

Dr. MEINK. Senator, I commit to working with you, Hickam, and Hawaii, or in general, critical to operations within INDOPACOM Theater. So, I've had an opportunity to spend and operate out of there in the past. I understand the importance of it, and I will commit to working with you, and Congress, and with the Navy, the new Secretary of the Navy, to work on those issues.

Senator HIRONO. Of course, I'd like to see a lot more coordination between the Navy and the Air Force on the needs these construction needs. So, I hope that you have some plans on how you will enhance the kind of coordination I'm talking about?

Dr. MEINK. Yes, Senator, as I just mentioned, I think it's going to be critically important that I work closely with the Navy and the Department of Air Force, of course, to do what we need to do to ensure that the infrastructure in Hawaii can support INDOPACOM.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you. I'm running out of time. But, you know, the infrastructure needs and the modernization needs of all of our bases are, I think, critical for readiness, national security. I do have a question relating to a concern about the State of our military base, again, particularly in Hawaii, and that's why I'm introducing a requirement in this year's NDAA for each military service to submit a 30-year, a 30-year infrastructure plan modeled after the Navy's annual 30-year ship building plan.

This will ensure, one hopes, long-term planning, resilience, investments, and the accountability for all services. Would you support, Dr. Meink, a 30-year infrastructure plan for the Department of the Air Force?

Dr. MEINK. Senator, as I always have for my career, I will work to answer and address any language we get from Congress.

Senator HIRONO. I think that we need a longer-term plan, because what happens is when you don't have this kind of a plan, then the money that is supposed to go for these kinds of modernization and improvements gets taken for other purposes. That is why I think that if we have a long-term plan, that we in Congress will be able to see whether you are comporting with such a plan. So, I hope that you will see your way to supporting such a requirement in the NDAA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Members are reminded that suggested legislation should be submitted by Monday night, next, for inclusion in the NDAA.

Thank you, Senator Hirono, and Senator Banks. You are next.

Senator BANKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Meink, the President has expressed historic confidence in the Air National Guard by nominating General Caine to be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. That's never happened before; to have a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs come from the National Guard, and I wonder if you could speak to the importance of the Air National Guard in the overall Air Force mission, and the priority of the Air National Guard, and what that will look like on your watch?

Dr. MEINK. Thank you, thank you for the question, Senator, and thank you for the opportunity to speak offline. Yes, the National Guard is critically important. It is a significant portion of the Department's capabilities across the board from tankers to fighter aircraft. It will continue to be an important part of the Department, and we need to continue to support and work closely with the States and with Congress to make sure that stay so.

Senator BANKS. On that note, as you know, the Air Force is shrinking. We're not buying enough planes to keep the force at its current size, but that means that the Air Force Reserves and the National Guard carries a greater priority in the mission. How can

we ensure that the Air National Guard is getting its fair share of new fighter aircraft?

Dr. MEINK. So, Senator, one of the things I plan to do, and again, is take a holistic look across all the modernization activities to understand what we need from a numbers perspective. How fast do we need to build both to support the Active Duty and the Reserve units? Then, I will advocate for whatever that requirement is or whatever the capability is, and whatever the resources that are needed to meet the requirement both up to the Administration and to Congress.

Senator BANKS. Well, I appreciate that. I look forward to working with you to make sure that the Air National Guard doesn't get the short end of the stick, like it often does.

Dr. Meink, your first Air Force assignment was flying KC-135s at Grissom Air Force Base in Indiana. Can you talk about how important the effort is there, and why it matters, not just to Indiana, but to the country and our national defense?

Dr. MEINK. Yes. So, this is probably an area I'm a little bit biased on since I started my career in tankers. It has always been critical, both from a strategic nuclear mission, as well from a conventional mission.

One of the reasons we were pulled off of alert and sent to the Gulf War was because tankers were not only necessary for the strategic mission, but they were just critical for operations that were going on in the Middle East. So, yes, the tanker force has been and always will be, and to some degree, I think it's becoming more important given the—in the PACOM theater, where the ranges are even longer than what they are in some of the other theaters.

So, we need to continue—we need to ensure that the tanker force both Active and Reserves are able to support mission.

Senator BANKS. Does this surprise you? They're still flying the same planes there that they were flying when you were there?

Dr. MEINK. I have to admit a little bit, but to some degree not that I have too deep, but they had instances of zero time those airplanes when I was Active Duty, when they reengine them. So, it was almost a brand-new airplane, effectively. But it is still, you know, 60-odd-years old. That's still pretty old, even if you've done a lot of maintenance on them.

Senator BANKS. The Air Force refueling tankers are, on average, among the oldest aircraft in the fleet. The Air Force isn't buying enough new tankers to replace the ones that were retiring. The same goes for Grissom, the place where, as you said, you started your career. Grissom has a more than a two-mile runway, one of the longest in the United States of America.

As far as I can tell, the Air Force needs new tankers for Grissom, which otherwise threatens to close down the base. We would lose that runway, that important asset that we have. How should we be working to fix the Air Force refueler fleet?

Dr. MEINK. Right now, the new tanker is the focus, right? We have to work with both within the Government and with the contractor to get that program on track, to get the production rates up, and drive the cost down so that we can afford to procure the tanker force that's necessary both to expand and replace as even no great airplane.

Senator, you're exactly right. It is getting pretty old. We were going to have to replace those which means we need to get the new tanker into full production.

Senator BANKS. Well, I look forward to working with you. Your background is perfect for this job. You have my full support, and to each of the other three with us today, I don't have time to ask questions, too, but congratulations. I look forward to working with you, too. I yield back.

Chairman WICKER. Senator Banks, in the summer of 1971, I did my field training at Grissom Air Force Base, and my first flight on the KC-135 was during that time at Grissom. So, you're bringing back memories, and, yes, they like the Buffs, they've been flying and doing well for a long time.

Senator Warren, you are next.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Healthcare for our men and women in uniform is critical in peacetime and even more so in wartime. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, you're going to be responsible for ensuring nearly 10 million servicemembers and their families receive quality healthcare, including timely access to medication.

I am very concerned about our over-reliance on foreign nations for very medications that put the health of servicemembers at risk and our national security along with it. DOD spends over \$5 billion on prescription drugs each year. It's a lot of money. But in November, 2023, the Defense Logistics Agency released a report revealing that the supply chain for a third of all drugs on the FDA's Essential Medicines list is at very high risk. Why? Because the ingredients from these drugs are sourced from China, or we don't even know where they're sourced from.

So, Mr. Bass, do you agree that it is a threat to our readiness and to the potential health of our servicemembers that DODs pharmaceutical supply chain relies so heavily on China?

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Senator, and thank you again for meeting with me. I do agree that it is a threat. It is a vulnerability.

Senator WARREN. So, this over reliance gives our adversaries the power to restrict DODs access to drugs when we need to be able to treat our men and women in uniform. It also leaves us with much less visibility into the practices of foreign manufacturers, which by the way, routinely have quality issues that threaten both the efficacy and the safety of these drugs.

For these reasons, the DOD report recommends boosting the production of finished drugs, active pharmaceutical ingredients, and other key starting materials so that we are making more of this right here in the United States. Mr. Bass, do you think DOD should work to onshore the critical drugs the military needs, including writing contracts that require manufacturers to onshore these capabilities?

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Senator. I do, I think that we need to work with our industrial base, our private and public partners, and we need to have rapid response contracts, and we need to make sure that we either onshore or nearshore capabilities.

Senator WARREN. Good. I'm glad to hear you say this. DOD should prioritize domestic purchasing, but there are some instances

where it makes sense for DOD to actually produce the medication itself, like when the DOD is the sole customer for that medication.

One example the adenovirus vaccine, which is critical in preventing serious respiratory illness among servicemembers, particularly servicemembers in basic training. DOD developed the vaccine and licensed it then to private industry. But because the military is basically the only buyer, DOD couldn't find a commercial manufacturer for nearly a decade. DOD eventually had to pay a private manufacturer nearly \$100 million just to resume production. During the years that the private sector refused to manufacture for DOD, there were thousands of cases of adenovirus per month, and servicemembers who actually died.

Mr. Bass, if confirmed, will you commit to expanding DOD's capabilities of producing essential drugs in-house to reduce risk and to secure DOD's medical supply chain?

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Senator. The health and well-being of all of our military members is a priority. I'm not familiar with the report, but I commit to working with you and your staff.

Senator WARREN. All right. I appreciate that, because this is a serious problem. Ultimately, these are investments that will pay off. One expert estimated that DOD would make its money back in 3 years after building its own adenovirus manufacturing facility.

This is a longstanding bipartisan concern. I worked with Senator Rubio for years on this, and last year, the Senate adopted our language directing the DOD to enter into contracts to domestically manufacture drugs and drug components that are currently sourced overseas, and that are used exclusively by the military. I want to see us get that in the final version of the NDAA. There's more work to do, and I look forward to working with you on this, Mr. Bass. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. Senator Tuberville is next.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, gentlemen.

Mr. Duffey, I just got back from Huntsville, Alabama last week or so, and watched the performance of high energy lasers. Senator King had brought that up about spending all these millions knocking down these drones. What's your thoughts on high energy and what you've seen the progress in the last few years? I've seen a lot in the last 4 years, myself. Your thoughts?

Mr. DUFFEY. Well, Senator, thank you for the question, and for the great State of Alabama's contribution to the defense industrial base.

I agree with Senator King and with you. Directed energy and high energy lasers would provide a tremendous capability when we think through some of the threats that we face, whether it comes to counter-UAS [unmanned aircraft system] systems and really the threat we face, whether it's from adversaries like the Houthis that are able to inflict low cost kinetics at us which require us to expend high cost weapon systems.

I think if we can get the technology where we need to be with directed energy and higher energy lasers, that would provide us with the capability to have very low-cost response to those threats, and in the future of a distributed warfare with swarms and that

sort of things, I think that'll be critical for us to establish that capability.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you.

The progress we've made has been small, private companies. As Senator King was saying, sometimes they get bought out and they move down the line, or can't make it because of funding. But I think they're doing outstanding job. I'd like to, when you're confirmed, come down and visit and see this for yourself.

Mr. DUFFEY. I look forward to it, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Dr. Meink and Dr. Michael, just a question for you here on the future of engineering in your departments. Both of you, we're going to have a tough time keeping good engineers and people employed because of the private companies taking our good people away out of the military.

What's your thoughts and your plan of hopefully keeping the best and the brightest in the military instead of taking the private route? Either one of you or both of you.

Mr. MICHAEL. I'd say it's twofold, Senator Tuberville. First, we have to have some successes that are well promoted inside the science and technology enterprise. If DARPA does something great, we need to get it out of the labs and into production fast, and that gives people motivation to want to be part of one of those organizations.

The second thing is we should be working with private industry more. If you take artificial intelligence, there's a lot of money being spent, and a lot of research, and a route of dollars. We shouldn't have to duplicate that in every area of the Government. We should be leveraging where they're spending more and doing ahead. The things we have to do on the basic research side that's not profitable for private industry, we've got to get it out of the labs faster and into production sooner.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Dr. Meink?

Dr. MEINK. Thanks for the question, Senator. Just to kind of echo, I think it's not just money. I think it is the opportunity to do advanced research, do advanced engineering that has a mission outcome, right? That what we've found in my current organizations, it's a very highly technical workforce. We've done very well in recruiting and, and retention.

It goes kind of back to the quality of service I mentioned a little bit earlier. When you bring in these really skilled, talented people. Regardless of what that talent is, there needs to be an opportunity for them to be successful and to do what they love to do. Because it takes a lot of work to get some of these skill sets. I think in many cases, that's even more important than just pure funding or pure salary.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you.

We talk about machines a lot, but we don't talk about people enough, and people are what's going to get the job done for us. Mr. Bass, it's becoming more and more common for members of our armed services to be referred away from the military treatment facilities to civilian providers. The consequences are enormous to the taxpayer, the cost. We want to take care of our servicemembers. How do we fix this problem?

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Senator, and thank you again for meeting with me offline. We need to take a look at medical readiness as our priority, and we want to make sure we meet the access to care standards for our military members. It's a delicate balance between going to the direct care system, and the MTFs, and then to the private sector.

We need to look at and encourage healthcare and the MTFs for both volume and complexity, but when necessary to meet medical readiness standards. We need to also send it out to the community. So, we have to look at the delicate balance between the both. And if confirmed, I'll work with the staff to make sure that we're meeting access standards, getting healthcare for our troops and they're getting world-class care.

Senator TUBERVILLE. And as you and I talked about, you know, cutting costs, we need to involve the 21st century of AI into the things that we do between doctors, and hospitals, and drug companies, and all the things that can cut back costs. They're there, we just don't use them for some reason. But I would hope we would get involved in that. Thank you, guys.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. Senator Slotkin.

Senator SLOTKIN. I yield to Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. I thank Senator Slotkin because I'm off to Foreign Relations after this. So, thank you for yielding your time, and thank you, Chairman Wicker. Thank you to the witnesses for being here, for your families, for your willingness to serve.

Dr. Meink, it's good to see you. Thanks for meeting with me last month. I want to say thank you to Senator Banks, although he is no longer here, for bringing up the importance of the National Guard because I could not agree more. Dr. Meink, as we discussed, Nevada's Air National Guard's 152d Airlift Wing in Reno flies the dangerous Modular Airborne Firefighting System, easier to say, MAFFS, the MAFFS mission. It flies it with its legacy C-130Hs. They fly low and slow at max gross weight over wildfires and mountainous terrain.

So, upgrading to the C-130Js would provide increased power and cargo capacity for flight retardant, which equals increased flight safety and firefighting capability in Nevada, and, actually, throughout the Western states, which is their mission every year we're plagued by devastating wildfires. Just earlier this year, the 152d Airlift Wing was activated to fight those fires around Los Angeles.

Upgrading to the Js is also critical, because during the summer months, C-130H is fully loaded with fire retardant, can't even take off from Reno with a full tank of fuel due to the heat and elevation. This wouldn't be a problem for the C-130Js. So, it's why no other base candidate has greater operational need.

Dr. Meink, the fiscal year 2024 defense appropriations procured 8 C-130Js, which weighed a basing decision by the Secretary of the Air Force. If confirmed, will you ensure that the 152d Airlift Wing receives those C-130Js? We actually were next on the list, so that they can more capably and safely carry out their dangerous firefighting mission throughout the Western United States.

Dr. MEINK. Senator, thank you for the question, and thank you for the time. My Sherpa is actually a C-130J pilot, so I've gotten a lot of indoctrination on importance of the C-130J. I promise to

work with you, Senator, as soon as I get confirmed and get an opportunity to take a look at the basing laid out, I will work with the Committee and with you to make sure that is fully considered in those decisions.

Senator ROSEN. Yes. Location, mission served is always really important. I know we also discussed this, and I see some young kids here in the audience. Airmen stationed at Creech Air Force Base, Northwest of Las Vegas, they fly the MQ-9 Reapers, the unmanned aerial system. They struggle to find adequate childcare options because their shift schedules are outside of normal business hours. They actually go 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to support those global operations.

The DODs attempts to help provide in-home childcare solutions for servicemembers in regions with exceptionally high demand. They've just not been successful so far. A lot of it has to do with the red tape and cumbersome requirements, which essentially renders in-home childcare reimbursement unavailable for many Nevada families. We would be able to maybe do this within the community if we could cut some of the red tape. We can serve each other.

Dr. Meink, this is so important for the needs of our families, and for our mission, as well as they may be based in Nevada, but they're not flying in Nevada. Maybe can you commit to working with me to make this program work better for our families. It's a quality of life and a quality for our mission. Particularly those at Creech, they really work outside those normal business hours.

Dr. MEINK. Yes. Senator, I commit to work with you. As I mentioned earlier, my wife is a retired Air Force officer. I spent time both Active in Reserves and civilian. I understand the challenges, particularly in some of the remote locations. We go to these remote locations for a reason, but it does create challenges and red tape. Yes, we will, I will. I commit to work with you on streamlining that.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I so appreciate that. My last question really quickly is about Nevada Test and Training Range, the crown jewel of the Air Force Nellis Air Force Base, the Knitter—

Chairman WICKER. What did you say? What?

Senator ROSEN. The Nevada Test and Training Range, the Knitter. The Knitter. I'm sorry, that's what the Air Force calls it. Their crown jewel. We are proud to say that provides the largest air and ground military training space in the Lower 48. It can never beat Alaska on that amount of space, sorry. But for the evaluations of weapons systems, tactics development, advanced air combat training without interference from commercial aircraft.

Knitter modernization has been among the Air Force top priorities to ensure that our high-end training keeps pace with current and emerging threats and capabilities. We were able to finally pass NDAA modernization fiscal year 2024. That's the collaboration between the Nevada delegation, the Air Force, Department of Interior, other local stakeholders. Almost 90 percent of Nevada's land is owned or managed by the Federal Government in some form or fashion. So, there's a lot of pieces and parts.

So, we'll take this for the record, but I'm going to ask what your priorities for future investments at the Knitter are, and how do we

envision the range evolving? But in deference to everybody else who's waiting, and Senator Slotkin who allowed me to get over to Foreign Services, we'll take that for the record.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you-all for your time.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much, Senator Rosen. Senator Slotkin.

Senator SLOTKIN. Thank you. Thanks for being here. Congratulations.

I remember coming in front of this panel under Chairman Levin to do a panel confirmation hearing, and I remember being the target of that, and everyone else just sat there very quietly and got no questions. So, for those of you having different experiences today, congratulations.

Chairman WICKER. I think you were you were in junior high?

[Laughter.]

Senator SLOTKIN. I was not in junior high, but I will say I got the full McCain treatment, and remember it to this day. So, you should be proud and happy that none of you, I think, have received the McCain treatment.

A couple of questions for Dr. Meink. You know, in Michigan, we have Selfridge Air Force Base, the only Air National Guard-controlled base in the country. We've discussed this, and any good Michigander will constantly bring up our interest in a replacement fighter mission for our A-110's, which are phasing out in fiscal year 2027.

I know that in order to have a better shot of having a fighter mission, we need more airplanes. I just want you to know that there's lots of us on this Committee for various reasons, who want the Air Force to have more airplanes. But will you please commit to working with us on a replacement mission, a fighter mission, not a refuel—we've got those in coming—but a fighter mission for Selfridge Air Force Base?

Dr. MEINK. Senator, I commit to work with the Committee both on—to make sure we have the right number of platforms, and where those platforms are betted down on. Happy to do that.

Senator SLOTKIN. But the right number is more, right?

Dr. MEINK. Right. Number is likely more, Senator, yes.

Senator SLOTKIN. I mean, no matter what it is, it's more. Okay. Good. All right. Well, looking forward to working with you and love to invite you to Selfridge, and have you come formally and check out what we have going on. It's an amazing base, so.

Dr. MEINK. Happy to do so, Senator.

Senator SLOTKIN. Great. Switching gears. Mr. Duffey, I know you've been sitting in the Secretary of Defense's front office, and I believe acting as his Deputy Chief of Staff. So, really at his right hand. You're about to become the Head of Acquisition for the entire Department of Defense. That's a huge job. Hugely sensitive job. We don't want other countries knowing what we're acquiring, and so they can defeat it.

The leadership of this Committee has sent a very standard letter to the Department of Defense acting Inspector General, asking for an investigation of what has happened with potentially classified information being on the Signal chat. What do you think of this in-

vestigation? Will you commit to participating since you were right there in the right hand of Secretary Hegseth during this moment?

Mr. DUFFEY. Senator, I was not a part of the chat that's in question. I defer to others on the investigation. I will continue, as I have in the past, always to communicate through approved channels with sensitive information.

Senator SLOTKIN. But if the acting Inspector General came to you as someone who's been so closely working in the front office of the Secretary, you would participate in such an investigation?

Mr. DUFFEY. I would participate. I would follow Department procedure if that included the investigation.

Senator SLOTKIN. Are you aware of any other Signal communications that has gone on from the front office of the Secretary of Defense, either him or his senior staff that have involved operationally sensitive information, information about specific Whitman's platforms, the timing of operations, or anything having to do with senior leader decision making? Are you aware of any other Signal chains that you, your staff or your boss have been on in the past 90 days?

Mr. DUFFEY. I'm not aware of Signal chats that contain sensitive information. No.

Senator SLOTKIN. Okay. So, you can confirm with a clear yes or no, you have not been on any Signal chains that provide operationally sensitive or classified information?

Mr. DUFFEY. No, I have not.

Senator SLOTKIN. Okay, great. That's makes me feel good. We all know that our main competitor in the acquisition space is China. That they have invested in technology that is purposely meant to undercut our advantages in a fight.

So, if you can sum up in a bumper sticker what you're going to focus on in the acquisition world in order to shred that gap that we have with them, what is that bumper sticker?

Mr. DUFFEY. Thank you for the question, Senator. I think two really critical metrics when it comes to measuring the success of our acquisition system. One is speed, and second is capacity. I think nobody beats us on performance and capability, but we need to accelerate speed, and we need to manage cost.

I think the best incentive because our industrial base is absolutely critical to providing this, this is something that they do best. It's one of our greatest national assets, is our economic power and our innovation within our industrial base.

If confirmed in this job, it would be a priority for me to convene leaders of industry to understand what are the barriers that get in the way of business, wanting to do business with the defense industrial base, and ensuring that we can benefit from the incentives that competition provides.

The more interest we have in the defense industrial base, the more innovation we'll get, and I think the more there will be effective incentives to provide capable capability at cost and at speed.

Senator SLOTKIN. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. A key matter that needs attention. Thank you very much for the question and the answer. Senator Schmitt.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, I've said this earlier today. I've been asked more questions about Signal in the last 2 days by these journalists who didn't seem to care at all that we had a commander-in-chief who couldn't put two sentences together for 4 years. So, forgive me if I'm not being caught up in this faux outrage that is being demonstrated by my Democrat colleagues about a Signal chat that didn't have war plans.

It occurs to me that this is more to do about the election loss, and rooting against President Trump, and trying to get a scalp than it is about national security. So, keep going with it. Keep going with it. Because this is the failed stuff that didn't work for you before.

Dr. Meink, I want to draw your attention because we have a President now that we'll take decisive action. Clearly, the announcement of NGAD, moving forward with NGAD is a real positive. Just so happens that the F-47 will be built by Boeing in St. Louis, which is a big win. But I think it's a big win for the country to move forward. How do you see our strategic—the Chairman and I wrote an op-ed last year about doubling-down really on our air superiority. It's a real important thing for us to do, strategically.

Where do we stand right now? How important was that decision in your mind?

Dr. MEINK. I think it was very, very important, Senator. Again, thank you for the one-on-ones we got to do. I appreciate the time. So, I think the Department of the Air Force, Air Superiority Global Strike, all the command and control, ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance], all the systems that the Department is responsible for are becoming increasingly important, particularly in a China fight when it's such a high threat environment.

You know, the sixth-generation capability that NGADs will bring, as well as the B-21 and other systems, the long-range munitions that we're developing, all those are going to be extremely important. Probably more so almost than probably since World War II with respect to the importance of air superiority and aircraft, in general, Senator. So, I think it's a very important decision.

Senator SCHMITT. One of the thing that is just worth mentioning, I know you've been asked a couple questions about this from some other Senators on the committee, but we have an Air Force Reserve fighter Wing, the 442d, that the A-10 is going away. So, these follow-on missions and the critical personnel that, you know, a highly trained, and if there's not a sort of a follow-on mission, you lose that expertise. It's really, really hard to get it back.

There's been a lot of discussions that I'll look forward to talking with you and others about. The F-15 seems to make a lot of sense there. But Dr. Meink, I also want to ask you, you have a pretty unique perspective having served as the Deputy Director of NRO, and been responsible for procurement with commercial space capabilities. If confirmed you'll have a responsibility for managing kind of the other side of that collaborative partnership. From the Space Force side, how do you view the role of commercial space imagery providers? I say this, NGA West is in St. Louis, a huge asset and critical to our national security. How do you view that given your role, your previous role?

Dr. MEINK. I think commercial space, in general, is going to play a continuing bigger and bigger part in what we do both from a commercial space and then also from national security, imaging services are a big part of that.

We've made a lot of advances in my current job. We've dramatically expanded the number of commercial providers. It's been interesting, right, operating in that highly dynamic, DC commercial space. We've learned some lessons, but I think we've come out of it stronger. I expect to and hope to, if confirmed, take those lessons that I've learned work in that, in the NRO, to the Department.

Senator SCHMITT. I guess for whoever, got one question left, so whoever wants to jump in, and Dr. Meink, I feel like I've been dominating the questions with you. We've heard a lot about procurement reform and being more nimble. You've probably been asked, and I was in and out of this hearing about this before, but what are—if there were two things that we could do better. What would it be?

Mr. DUFFEY. Senator, I'll take the question. I think, first of all, I think we need to really examine very closely what are the regulatory burdens that we place on businesses that want to do business with the Federal Government. I think we need to be a dependable and reliable customer because competition is the greatest incentive structure that we can have for our industry.

There's the famous spaghetti chart out there that talks about post-Last Supper in the late 1990s. The Defense Industrial Base went from 51 primes to 5 primes, which really puts—and our prime contractors deliver tremendous capability. But I do think we deprive ourselves of the benefits of competition.

It would be my priority, if confirmed, as the Under Secretary, to examine where are those opportunities that we could remove the barriers to entry for both new, venture-backed, or private capital-backed companies, or to help companies that are already providing value, that are struggling to get access to the Pentagon, to give them greater access. Because I think that will just really help us to identify and accelerate capability to the warfighter.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much, Senator Schmitt. Senator Kelly.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to comment on some of the comments that my colleague from Missouri made about the Signal chat chain talking about war plans. Well, I have planned and conducted strikes off of aircraft carriers, multiple strikes into harm's way over Iraq and Kuwait. I would agree with the Senator from Missouri, this is not an entire war plan. What this is an operational plan for very risky combat operations off of an aircraft carrier. It's not all the information.

But the most critical information that we have in our Government are things like launch time off of a platform, in this case of an air aircraft carrier, type of airplane F-18s, MQ-9s weapons like tomahawks, time on target. It is very critical information. Somebody could argue that the piece of paper, it came off of the Signal chat, it did not say "secret" or "top secret."

When you have pilots that are about to go feet dry over a foreign nation within an hour or 2 hours, and that information is being shared on a non-secure system, it puts those pilots at great risk. I agree. It is not all the information, but some of the most critical information that you would not want to be released is what was in that Signal chain.

So, whereas I do agree with some of what you said with regards to an entire plan, sure. But the most critical pieces were shared publicly on an unsecured system by the Secretary of Defense.

So, with that, I've got some other questions about maritime industry and the SHIPS for America Act, which is my legislation with Senator Young of Indiana. Mr. Duffey and Mr. Michael, one issue I've been focused on for a long time is the State of our maritime industry. TRANSCOM relies on U.S.-flagged vessels and American mariners to provide strategic sealift, and right now, we don't have enough vessels or mariners to support sustained operations overseas. It's a national security issue for us.

We also have a hollowed-out shipyard industrial base. We the United States, and the only ocean-going ships we build in the United States now are Navy vessels, and that means constrained supply chains and increased costs for the Navy. These are all really pressing issues for our national security.

So, Mr. Duffey first, and then Mr. Michael. One, what steps would you take to ensure that our cast and forged industrial shipbuilding base from forging to supply chains and production are ready for competition, crisis, and conflict?

Mr. DUFFEY. Senator, thank you for your concern about this very important issue. I had a chance to read the GAOs [Government Accountability Office] testimony this week with respect to shipbuilding, and one of the major concerns that sort of was revealing to me and reviewing that was that since 2003, we have not increased the number of ships in our Navy. Which is really puts us at a disadvantage when maritime supremacy is absolutely critical in terms of deterring our adversary and preventing future conflict.

My understanding of the challenges in the shipbuilding industrial base includes workforce and supply chain. If I'm confirmed into the role, it would be absolutely a priority for me to work with this Committee, and with you, and thank you for your leadership on the SHIPS legislation, because I think where we've seen success in the Defense industry is where we can leverage capability in the commercial industry. I think that's one of the proposals of your legislation is how do we enhance both defense and commercial shipbuilding within the United States?

Senator KELLY. Then, Mr. Michael, would you agree that there are lessons that we can learn from the private sector when it comes to shipbuilding best practices?

Mr. MICHAEL. There are a lot of lessons learned. I think the most sophisticated manufacturers today have very sort of dashboard-like understanding of where their supply chains are. Every supplier, they're required to build something so that they can eliminate bottlenecks. They could do just-in-time ordering. They know what's backlogged so they can start on other processes while they wait for the parts that are in short supply to come in.

AI can help with that, and look through and down the supply chain across countries and figure out where the materials are that we need and schedule labor to be efficient on that. That's done very effectively in lots of industries today, that we should be borrowing that technology or buying it, or building it ourselves, to do that in these industries given the amount of money we spend.

Senator KELLY. Do you think having a vibrant commercial maritime industry is going to help us build Navy ships?

Mr. MICHAEL. I think it can. I think the ancillary technologies that are built to manage supply chains, and manufacturing, and labor can be used to do the same thing in the military.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much.

Mr. Michael, have you read my ForGED Act?

Mr. MICHAEL. Twice.

Chairman WICKER. Okay. Thank you very much. Senator Sullivan, you're recognized.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Michael, that's a good answer.

[Laughter.]

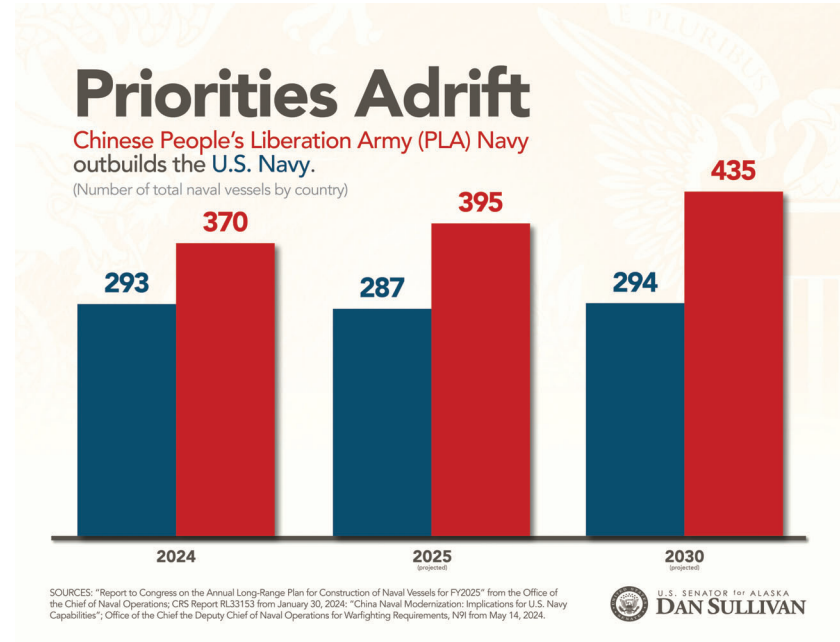
Senator SULLIVAN. Got you some points there. Good work.

I want to thank all of you, all four of you, your willingness to serve our country. Some of you have been doing that most of your career, so it's a good, good panel, and I appreciate everybody's service, and your family's service, too. Families mean a lot in these kinds of jobs. So, to your family members here as well, I want to thank all of you.

Dr. Meink, I have shown you this slide here, and Mr. Duffey as well.

Chairman WICKER. Let's put it in the record. Without objection. [The information referred to follows:]





Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My part of the world in Alaska, the AOR [area of responsibility], that's, you know, Arctic Northern Pacific, we're getting a lot of action in our neck of the woods with Russian "Bear" Bomber incursions into our ADIZ [Air Defense Identification Zone], Russian Navy Vessels task force into our EEZ [Exclusive Economic Zone]. I just got a report harassing our fishermen just last month.

Again, joint Russian-Chinese strategic bomber task force into our ADIZ, which has never happened in the history of our country with armed MiG fighters and joint Russian, Chinese naval task force. The lower 48 press doesn't cover this a lot, but it is a lot of action in the great State of Alaska. We are on the front lines of great power competition. I want to ask a few questions on that.

You know, Dr. Meink, we also have over 100 fifth-generation fighters and F-16s, and our young men and women who go do these intercept missions all the time. These are tough missions. I was really glad to hear that you've done these missions as a tanker navigator and flew intercept missions against the Russians in the Alaska ADIZ. So, thank you for that service.

But here's my question. We need more tankers. There's no doubt about it. It's obvious. The Air Force has been telling me literally for 10 years that we need more tankers. It went from KC-46s—yes, we're going to put them up there to—oh, well now we're going to put them all CONUS [Continental United States]. I don't think that makes any sense. But that was the decision. They said, but we know we need more tankers in Alaska, so we're going to move KC-135s from Kadena to Alaska, then they rope a dope. That one,

that was General CQ Brown when he was chief of staff. That was previous chiefs of staff of the Air Force.

Finally, I wrote a rather forceful letter to Secretary Kendall saying, "Hey, it's been about 10 years since you guys committed to tankers in my State, which we all know we need, right?" Just go do one of those. I mean, you know, these guys go intercept Russian "Bear" bombers. They got to tank four to five times just to get there. Really tough missions that our young men and women do a great job at.

Secretary Kendall, in the fall, wrote and said to me, "Yes, Senator, the 4 KC-135s are coming." We had one. Then I heard—I was just home over the weekend with some folks saying, actually, they moved that one back.

Can I get your 110 percent commitment? These four KC-135s are coming to Eielson. Our Air Force needs them. It's been 10 years since the Air Force committed to me on this. I'm getting a little impatient, as you can tell, but this isn't a hard call. Everybody and their mother knows that we need more tankers up in Alaska, given the action. If we have to surge forces from the Lower 48 to INDOPACOM, they're all going to fly over Alaska anyway. So, can I get your commitment on that? No, head, no bob and weaving. Just tell me yes.

Dr. MEINK. Senator, if Secretary Kendall committed to moving four tankers up there—

Senator SULLIVAN. Everybody for 10 years they've been committing.

Dr. MEINK. Then I will work to follow through on that, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. So, that's a yes?

Dr. MEINK. That's a yes, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. Thank you.

Mr. Duffey, I want to just talk to you and Dr. Meink very quickly, and we can do it in more detail. But the INDOPACOM commander, the NORTHCOM commander, given this action, NORTHCOM commander, was here just last week—or I'm sorry, 3 weeks ago, in testimony saying this is going to only increase, and we need the infrastructure to deal with it.

As I just mentioned, our great airmen have to fly 1,000 miles just to get to the ADIZ just to intercept. So, they have suggested the NORTHCOM commander more infrastructure, a dead horse in Alaska, Galena, and very importantly, ADAC, and an Air Force hangar with regard to tankers. Can I get your commitment to work with me, both of you on those infrastructure projects that the NORTHCOM [United States Northern Command] and INDOPACOM [United States Indo-Pacific Command] commander have both testified in the last month that they need,

Mr. DUFFEY. Well, give me a chance to get to Alaska, Senator. I will commit, yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes, we know you're coming to Alaska.

[Laughter.]

Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink?

Dr. MEINK. Yes, Senator.

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

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

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Meink, congratulations on your nomination to serve as the Secretary of Air Force. Just want to say, I was happy we had a chance to meet at length in my office, and learn about a number of your priorities going forward.

As you know, Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Michigan was selected as the home of a dozen new KC-46 tankers, to follow up on Senator Sullivan's conversation. I, certainly, am grateful as you mentioned in the office, your commitment to honor that decision to place those KC-46s in Michigan. I look forward to officially welcoming you to visit Selfridge so you can see firsthand the incredible facility that is there.

Similar to Senator Slotkin, who I know raised this issue with you earlier, I also remain committed to securing a future fighter mission for Selfridge which is set to lose, as we talked about, it's A-10 squadron in fiscal year 2027.

During our meeting, we discussed the Air Force's fighter force structure and prioritizing the recapitalization of combat-coded fighter squadrons. As you know, without recapitalization, the DOD risks losing hundreds of skilled servicemembers at a time when we are already short over 1,000 fighter pilots and over 4,500 maintainers. Of the 25 Air National Guard Fighter Squadrons in existence today, 15 do not have a recapitalization plan. Being from a National Guard State, Air National Guard State, that concerns me a great deal.

So, my question for you, sir, is how can we ensure we are taking full advantage of the expertise of our current National Guard aviators and the crews that they have to address this personnel shortfall that the Air Force has?

Dr. MEINK. Again, Senator, I thank you for the question, but also, I thank you for the opportunity to sit down and talk with you a bit.

As I stated in the office, we for sure, the KC-46 tanker, we will commit to that. In discussion questions from Senator Slotkin, one of the things I will be looking at across the board is the procurement plan of fighters to meet the overall requirements that the Department has been given, and what are the resources to get to the right numbers of aircraft as we build out the F-35s.

Then, maintaining the fourth-generation fighters, and then moving on into the NGADs program, making sure we have the right numbers of platforms, and then look at where we're going to put those platforms. Senator, if confirmed, to work directly with you on where we think we're going to land and have that discussion for sure.

Senator KELLY. Great, great.

We also discussed in that office meeting how collaborative combat aircraft and other similar warfighting autonomous capabilities can be utilized and integrated alongside the KC-46s for both improved command and control. These autonomous aircraft will be, as you know, crucial in the Indo-Pacific given their relative low cost and the versatile capabilities as well as high numbers to be able to produce at scale.

So, my question for you, sir, is can you share your plans to prioritize and improve the acquisition process for autonomous capabilities to improve force mix of integrated Air Force platforms, as

well as weapon systems. Clearly, acquisition process needs to be a whole lot quicker, a whole lot more efficient. I'd love to hear your plans to make that happen.

Dr. MEINK. I can talk about improving acquisition rate of innovation for all day long. I think the key is have the right people running the programs, have the right set of requirements, give the right authorities to the program managers, and then support them through the acquisition. I've done that throughout my life with significant success, and I will continue to do so.

With respect to specific acceleration of the different unmanned systems, CCAs [Collaborative Combat Aircraft], and other follow-on systems. I haven't been given the detailed—you know, it's part of the larger NGAD CCA, the larger enterprise solution that the Department's been working on. I haven't gotten the detailed briefing on all that. But that will be a focus. It's a combination of not just the manpower forms, but it's the CCA, and I believe there's likely other platforms that'll be required.

That's going to have to be a focus because that's what that integration of those different type of platforms with ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] and other capabilities is what's going to be required to deter any aggressor and PACOM, any place else, and win, if we need to. We're going to have to make sure we get that right.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Dr. Meink. Look forward to working with you on that issue and the others that we discussed in my office. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Peters.

There is a vote on. I'm the only questioner remaining in the first round. Let me go quickly. Mr. Duffey, thank you for mentioning the FoRGED Act on multiple occasions. With regard to things like other transaction agreements and middle tier acquisition, you can go ahead with that now without the enactment of additional legislation. Is that correct?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes, Mr. Chairman, that is correct. If confirmed, I would look to find ways in advance of any additional legislation reforming the acquisition to ensure that the Department is maximizing the use of the flexibilities of the Congress has already provided.

Chairman WICKER. That's good. We need to do that, and we are going to work with you on that. Mr. Michael, let me ask about Defense Established Program to stimulate competitive research, or DEPSCoR. How can we buildup innovation across the heartland not just in Silicon Valley and Massachusetts?

Mr. MICHAEL. I think there's a lot of ways. I think the SBIR [Small Business Innovation Research] programs. I think the way we get our supply chains unlinked from our adversaries, those kinds of technologies or products, if you will, that we could do that are perfectly made for more manufacturing-style capabilities and software writing. I think there are lots of good universities in the center of the country that have lots of manufacturing capability, training programs, and there's lots of plants there that exist that maybe are not being used that would be used to do component building and so on.

So, I think that, plus focus on universities outside of the Ivy Leagues and the Coasts. There's lots of universities in Indiana, and in Chicago, in Illinois,

Chairman WICKER. Mississippi.

Mr. MICHAEL. Mississippi, perhaps, Alabama, that are doing great things. I think if we—they specialize in certain subject matter areas that we get a lot of productivity out of that part of the ecosystem.

Chairman WICKER. Very good.

Then, I'll end with Mr. Bass. You have experience in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Based on your experiences there, what additional steps should we take at the DOD to improve retention and recruitment of civilian healthcare personnel?

Mr. BASS. Thank you, Chairman. Recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff has to be a priority. We are in direct competition with the civilian sector for these critical skills and these specialists.

Chairman WICKER. It's a problem.

Mr. BASS. Yes, sir, absolutely. It is a problem, and it's difficult to compete. We need to take a look at Title 38 authorities to see if we can use that to strategically recruit specialists. We need to take a look at paying compensation packages. We should look at training opportunities to ensure that we recruit and retain these folks. We need to make sure we develop pipelines, recruiting pipelines from prominent universities in Mississippi, and to make sure that we have a necessary force to carry out our medical mission.

Chairman WICKER. Rhode Island, not so much?

Mr. BASS. Sir, I can't comment on that.

Chairman WICKER. Senator Reed, we've got a vote on?

Senator REED. Yes, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Okay. Well, thank you very much. With that, I'd like to thank our witnesses. Very good hearing. For the information of Members, question for the record will be due to the Committee within two business days of the conclusion of this hearing. With that, and with the thanks of the Committee, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:44 a.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Prepared questions submitted to Dr. Troy E. Meink 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 Secretary of the Air Force?

*Answer.* The Secretary of the Air Force is the senior civilian leader of the Department of the Air Force. Under USC Title 10, the Secretary has the responsibility to organize, train and equip the Department, which contains both the United States Air Force and the United States Space Force. Additionally, he or she is responsible for recruiting, for training and for overall administration, to include the morale and welfare of Airmen and Guardians and their families. This individual is responsible to the Secretary of Defense for the functioning and efficiency of the Department and must work closely with the Congress, sister services, industry partners, civic leaders and our Allies and partners to ensure the Air and Space Forces effectively support national defense objectives.

*Question.* In particular, what management and leadership experience do you possess that you would apply to your service as Secretary of the Air Force, if confirmed?

*Answer.* I have been serving in national security for over 35 years, first as an Active Duty Air Force officer, then as a career civil servant. My path of civil service has allowed me to lead and manage organizations with larger and larger scopes of responsibility. This includes my previous service as the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force for Space and my present role as the Principal Deputy Director of the National Reconnaissance Office. In my current role, I oversee an organization with a global footprint, thousands of employees and billions of dollars in national security contracts. I have successfully led 16 clean audits at the NRO. If confirmed, I plan on applying the lessons learned through these unique experiences to the Department of the Air Force.

*Question.* If confirmed, what duties and responsibilities would you assign to the Under Secretary of the Air Force?

*Answer.* Under title 10, the Under Secretary of the Air Force performs the duties and exercises such powers as the Secretary of the Air Force may prescribe. The Under Secretary serves as the Chief Management Officer for the Department and carries out the primary responsibility for the business operations of the Department of the Air Force. Additionally, the Under Secretary oversees other matters assigned by the Secretary. If confirmed, I will review the current duties and responsibilities

*Question.* If confirmed, over which members and organizations of the Air Force would you direct the Chief of Staff of the Air Force to exercise supervision and what would be the scope of such supervision? What other duties would you assign to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force?

*Answer.* Under Title 10, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Chief of Space Operations perform their assigned duties under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of the Air Force and are directly responsible to the Secretary. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the supervisory responsibilities of both Chiefs and consider any appropriate reallocation of duties and responsibilities. My priorities for them will be to assist me in improving the warfighter readiness of our Airmen and Guardians as well as improve their quality of life and quality of service.

*Question.* If confirmed, what innovative ideas would you consider providing to the Secretary of Defense regarding the organization and operations of the Department of the Air Force?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to bringing my 30 years of successful innovation to the Department of the Air Force. We need to not only innovate but innovated faster than our potential adversaries. To be successful at increasing our rate of innovation we will need to take holistic look at our strategies. We need to streamline the budgeting and acquisition process, tailor or risk management approach, increase the level of competition, broaden our industry base and ensure we are recruiting and retaining the needed talent. We also need to strive for innovation across all functions in the department.

#### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

*Question.* Federal ethics laws, like 18 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 decision making?

*Answer.* Yes.

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

*Answer.* I will comply with all recusal requirements under 18 U.S.C. § 208.

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

*Answer.* Yes.

#### MAJOR CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

*Question.* What would you see as your highest priorities for the near-term and long-term future of the Air Force?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will focus on the most critical areas needed to deter aggression and win decisively if conflict arises. This includes the near-term challenges of maintaining and operating our current capabilities and the long-term modernization activities we need to get right! There are critical modernization activities underway in all mission areas of the Air Force, including nuclear deterrence, Air Superiority, Global Strike, C2, Rapid Global Mobility and ISR. In addition, the U.S. lead-

ership in space is being challenged and I will work to ensure the U.S. Space Force doesn't let that happen.

*Question.* What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you would face if confirmed as Secretary of the Air Force?

Answer. If confirmed, I have no doubt that there will be several areas that require my immediate attention, to include the nuclear and conventional modernization going on across the Department. However, there are three significant challenges that I can readily identify based on the information available to me. First is the need for resilient space architectures; second is the auditability of the Department of the Air Force; third is maintaining a technological edge over our near-peer adversaries.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I would always look to work with the Secretary of Defense, my service counterparts, our industry partners, and this committee to address these challenges. For resilient space architectures, I would seek to leverage our commercial partners as much as possible, buying what we can and only building what we absolutely must. Widely proliferated space capabilities that leverage commercial industry deny our adversaries any "first-mover" advantage and thus have a deterrent effect on conflict in the space domain.

For auditability, I would leverage my experience at the National Reconnaissance Office as well as tools like artificial intelligence and machine learning that have not been available to the Department in previous decades.

I am committed to enabling the strongest ties between strategy, acquisition, and resources to support President Trump and Secretary Hegseth's priorities. We must ensure the Department's foundational processes deliver capabilities and closes gaps that are focused on warfighting and lethality. Today, we are in an age of rapidly changing technology where tech is obsolete almost as soon as it is developed, and the current geopolitical landscape demands speed and agility—this means an acquisition cycle far shorter than those of our legacy systems and prioritizing resource allocation against the most significant threats and toward the Department's plans to deal with those threats.

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

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

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

Answer. I believe that China poses the largest plausible military threat to the United States of America, as well as our Allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. China has utilized the last two or more decades to "go to school" on the United States as we were focused on countering violent extremism. They have used that time to modernize and attempt to catch up in terms of both capability and capacity. Furthermore, their aggressive behavior in places like the South China Sea conspicuously demonstrates a willingness to use military "hard" power to achieve their national security objectives. I am most concerned with the developmental timelines of their military programs; if we cannot shorten our own timelines in acquisition, they are likely to continue closing the gap.

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

Answer. While I acknowledge that I do not have access to all information, it is clear that Russia poses an acute threat to its European neighbors, many of whom are NATO Allies. Despite setbacks over the previous years of conflict in Ukraine, Russia has maintained a war economy and will remain a threat with its military power (conventional and strategic). I am more concerned with Russia's pursuit of asymmetric advantages in the space, information, cyber and electronic warfare domains.

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

Answer. While I do not have access to all the information regarding collusion among these four states, it is my understanding from open-source reporting that they are sharing resources and equipment. This has been most conspicuous in the conflict in Ukraine. Greater cooperation among these countries allows them to cover down on the shortfalls in each other's capabilities and capacity. If confirmed, I see

my role as organizing, training, and equipping the Air and Space Forces to a level of warfighting readiness that deters this kind of collusion in the future.

*Question.* In 2024, the Air Force announced a refocus on “Great Power Competition,” with a series of reorganizations intended to modernize force structure and force design, to align to the 2022 NDS.

In your view, has the GPC initiative been successful?

*Answer.* I have not been fully briefed on the extent of these initiatives to make a judgment on their success. I do agree, in principle, with the Department’s focus on the kind of high-end competition delineated in our National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving an in-depth briefing on this initiative, reviewing the data and analysis, and making my own assessment. I commit to sharing the results of that assessment with this committee.

*Question.* What do you perceive to be the Air Force’s role in competing with and countering China?

*Answer.* I believe the role of the Air and Space Forces is to achieve a level of warfighting capability, capacity, and readiness to deter China from pursuing the use of force as an avenue for achieving their national security objectives. On the strategic front, this means having a nuclear capability that is never in doubt. On the conventional side, it means being able to prosecute all our core functions at a time and place of our choosing. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and this Congress to ensure the Department has the authorities and resources to achieve that level of warfighting readiness and thus influence the decision making calculus of China.

*Question.* Is the Air Force adequately sized, structured, and resourced to implement the current strategy and the associated operational plans? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* While I have not been briefed on current operational plans, I understand from open-source reporting that the Air Force is smaller and older than it has ever been in its history. I am equally concerned—as a private citizen—about the low mission capable rates for our fleets, some of which have been reportedly as low as 50 percent or so. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving briefings on the adequacy of the force to implement these operational plans. If there are shortfalls, I commit to working with this Committee and this Congress to advocate for the resources needed.

*Question.* What are your primary lessons learned from observing operations in Ukraine and the Middle East that the Air Force must consider in its modernization efforts?

*Answer.* While there are several lessons that I have learned from open-source reporting of the conflict in Ukraine, there are two that I think are most useful to the position I have been nominated to take. First, the increased use of unmanned systems has already altered the character of war. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department of the Air Force is focused on both offensive and defensive unmanned systems and tactics.

Second, the need for resilience in our space architectures. The conflict in Ukraine has highlighted how dependent joint forces have become on space for capabilities like satellite communications and positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT). For our own joint force to prosecute its missions, our Space Force must have resilient architectures to ensure these capabilities are not lost in times of crisis or conflict.

*Question.* Does the Air Force have the requisite analytic capabilities and tools to support you, if confirmed, in evaluating the Air Force’s force structure and sizing strategies to ensure that it can and will generate forces that are manned, trained, and equipped to execute current plans and strategies? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* I am not aware of the specific analytic capabilities and tools the Air Force uses to evaluate its force structure. If confirmed, I look forward to learning what tools are being used to conduct analysis of force structure and if they are inadequate, I will advocate for bringing in the right tools and analytic capabilities. Moreover, I commit to full transparency with this Committee on the results of my assessments.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you address any gaps or shortfalls in the Air Force’s ability to meet the demands placed on it by the operational plans that implement the current strategy?

*Answer.* While I have not been briefed on current operational plans, I understand from open-source reporting that the Air Force is smaller and older than it has ever been in its history. I am equally concerned—as a private citizen—about the low mission capable rates for our fleets, some of which have been reportedly as low as 50 percent or so. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving briefings on the adequacy of the force to implement these operational plans. If there are shortfalls, I commit

to working with this Committee and this Congress to advocate for the resources needed.

*Question.* If confirmed, what changes or adjustments would you make in the Air Force's implementation of the current strategy?

Answer. I do not yet have access to the information necessary to make an assessment on the Air Force's implementation of the current strategy. However, I have seen through open source reporting the level of focus the Department has on high-end competition and conflict and I applaud efforts to re-prioritize after decades of countering violent extremism. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving briefings on the implementation plans for both Services and will make my own assessment. I commit to working with this committee to share the results of that assessment.

*Question.* How would you characterize your familiarity with the civilian leaders of the militaries of other nations and multi-national and international air power-focused consultative forums? If confirmed, on which leaders and forums would you focus your engagement with a view to advancing the interests of the Air Force?

Answer. I do not yet have access to the information necessary to make an assessment. In the execution of my current duties as Principal Deputy Director of the National Reconnaissance Office, I have some familiarity with civilian leadership in the national security establishments of other nations, but it is not extensive. If confirmed, I would place a premium on building positive bilateral and multilateral relationships with my counterparts in the military services of our partners and Allies. To my knowledge, there are many forums for facilitating that kind of engagement. Should I be fortunate to be confirmed to this position, I would prioritize building relationships with our Allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region, including our Quad partners and our ASEAN partners. I would also take care not to neglect our many European Allies and partners and am aware that there are several forums that the Secretary traditionally has an opportunity to engage in, including the Munich Security Conference and the Royal International Air Tattoo.

#### AIR FORCE READINESS

*Question.* How would you assess the current readiness of the Air Force—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—to execute its required missions?

Answer. My current understanding is the Air Force is ready today to deter and defend, and if necessary, to fly, fight and win against any adversary. However, I believe the Department's advantage is shrinking and the ability to overmatch adversaries is a concern.

*Question.* In your view, what are the priority missions for which current and future Air Force and Space Force forces should be trained and ready in the context of day-to-day activities, as well as for contingencies?

Answer. Guardians protect our Nation's interests in, from and to space. They must be trained and ready to fight and win in a contested environment, enable and deliver warfighting lethality to and as part of the Joint Force, and assure freedom of access for our forces while denying the same to our adversaries through day-to-day activities and contingencies.

To achieve this end, the Space Force must prioritize space domain awareness, resilience, and capabilities that "hold at risk" adversary spaces assets to protect the Joint Force.

Additionally, we must reinforce the warrior ethos within our Guardians, providing them with the equipment, the tactics, and the training required to use military force to control the space domain.

The Air Force provides airpower through 5 core functions—Air Superiority, Global Precision Attack, Rapid Global Mobility, Global ISR, and Command and Control. Together, these functions provide a range pre-emptive and reactive options to the National Command authority and allow the department to integrate with the joint force in peacetime, crisis, and high-end conflict. As we maintain readiness, individual units may not train to all 5 core functions, but as a department we stand ready to provide Air Superiority, Global Precision Attack, Rapid Global Mobility, Global ISR, and Command and Control, anywhere in the world, in support of U.S. national interests, Allies, and partners. Given the pervasive and increasing threat of small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), Airmen and Guardians should be trained to detect, respond and if necessary, counter sUAS in both day-to-day and contingency scenarios. Similarly, as more missile defense capabilities come online, Airman and Guardian operator training for those systems will also be necessary.

*Question.* Does the Air Force have the requisite analytic capabilities and tools to support you, if confirmed as the Secretary of the Air Force, in measuring its readiness to execute the broad range of potential Air Force missions envisioned by 2022

NDS and associated operational plans—from low-intensity, gray-zone conflicts to protracted high intensity fights? Please explain your answer.

Answer. To my knowledge, our current suite of authoritative data sources is not aligned to allow easy transfer of data that will allow us to analyze and report the readiness of our personnel, supply, equipment, and training levels. The Department must upgrade the current analytic tools to inform not only Service-level decisions, but to communicate readiness across the Joint Force, the Department of Defense, and Congress. My understanding is the Department needs new analytical tools to complement the efforts in improving force generation and presentation and allow the Air Force to better articulate capacity, readiness, and risk.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you prioritize maintaining readiness in the near term, with modernizing the Air Force to ensure future readiness?

Answer. Nuclear deterrence is foundational for our national security. Need to protect foundational readiness programs such as Flying Hours, Weapons Sustainment Support, and Pilot production.

We also need to balance today's requirements with the need to modernize and maintain future readiness, deterrence and lethality. Manage short-term risk to readiness to modernize and prepare our forces for mid-to-long term and enduring strategic missions as well as acute and persistent threats. We need to invest, modernize, and upgrade Operational Test and Training Infrastructure (OTTI) for the high-end training capability to sharpen Air Force and Joint Force combat effectiveness and lethality such as the Nevada Test and Training Range and the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex.

#### BUDGET

*Question.* If confirmed, by what standards would you measure the adequacy of funding for the Department of the Air Force?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with my senior military and civilian officials in assessing resources levels to ensure the Air Force and Space Force budgets achieve the priorities set forth by the Administration, with a laser focus on defending the homeland and deterring China and other competitors. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) must align with Defense strategic priorities and maintain readiness while modernizing capabilities to meet evolving threats. The DAF must maintain a competitive edge against threats posed by our strategic competitors to ensure air and space superiority and dominance over adversaries, while also projecting combat power to support the Joint Force. If confirmed, I would like to discuss specific assessments against all our priorities with Congress to ensure the DAF is resourced adequately.

*Question.* How will you ensure the Air Force is appropriately resourced to simultaneously modernize, grow readiness, and take care of its people?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize the unique Air Force capabilities critical to the Joint Force to generate lethality and achieve peace through strength. I will also prioritize rebuilding our military by matching threats to capabilities. Putting people first means ensuring the readiness of our troops and their families. It also means providing our troops with the most lethal and modern capabilities that will outpace our adversaries. I will work internally with stakeholders, the Administration, and ultimately, Congress to advocate for readiness and modernization funding, as well as taking care of our most important asset, people.

*Question.* Section 222a of title 10, U.S. Code, provides that not later than 10 days after the President's submission of the defense budget to Congress, each Service Chief must submit to the congressional defense committees a report that lists, in order of priority, the unfunded priorities of his or her armed force.

If confirmed, do you agree to support the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Chief of the Space Force in providing their unfunded priorities lists to Congress in a timely manner?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to prioritizing and including critical funding requirements in our budget requests. I will also support the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Chief of Space Operations in the submission of their unfunded priority lists in accordance with law.

#### ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

*Question.* Mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships are one of our greatest comparative advantages in competition with near-peer rivals.

What do you see as the role of the Air Force and Space Force in building relationships and interoperability with allies and partners?

Answer. The Air Force and Space Force are charged with developing combat-credible international partnerships that support U.S. objectives across, though, and

above AORs. The Air Force plays a crucial role equipping and training Allies and partners so they can defend themselves, deter adversaries, and fight alongside us. In addition, the scope and scale of the challenges within the space domain is too large for any one country—including the United States—to address alone, so we must fully leverage Allies and partners as force multipliers to achieve space superiority. Interoperability and interdependence with Allies and partners in the space domain broadens the number of systems available for space operations, strengthens resilience, and complicates adversaries' decision-making—making an attack on one of our space systems more risky, less profitable, and less likely to achieve the adversary's end states. With the growing number of Allies and partners standing up their own dedicated military space organizations we have incredible opportunities to play the same crucial roles in both air and space. We will continue to leverage these opportunities through international engagement that prioritizes integration of space capabilities, posture, training, wargaming, and exercising to dominate the space warfighting domain.

*Question.* If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to prioritize and strengthen existing U.S. alliances and partnerships, build new partnerships, and take advantage of opportunities in international cooperation?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue to advance President Trump's directive to achieve Peace Through Strength by empowering our Allies and partners via security cooperation to be force multipliers. Department of the Air Force security cooperation will facilitate greater burden-sharing with Allies and partners who are positioned to assume primary responsibility for defending their national and regional interests, freeing U.S. resources toward priorities aligned with U.S. national strategic objectives, to include homeland defense. We will achieve this strategic alignment through key-leader engagement, international armaments cooperation, and proactive export policy that increases the lethality, interoperability, and readiness of our Allies and partners to deter Chinese aggression.

#### INDO-PACIFIC REGION

*Question.* What are the key areas in which the Air Force and Space Force must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to deter Chinese aggression and, if necessary, prevail in a potential conflict with China?

*Answer.* The Space Force must keep the advantage we have maintained in space for over 60 years including counterspace capabilities. The Air Force must accelerate the modernization of its aging fleet and ensure high levels of readiness.

*Question.* How would you assess the threat to Air Force forces and facilities from Chinese missile forces? In your assessment, have Air Force investments, posture shifts and/or new operational concepts sufficiently addressed this threat?

*Answer.* To my knowledge, the threat to USAF forces and facilities from People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) are ever increasing due to the growing number, type, range and sophistication of missiles being produced year over year. The Agile Combat Employment (ACE) concept will make it harder for China to neutralize operations and increase aimpoints that must be targeted. While the USAF has made progress in addressing the Chinese missile threat, but there is more to be done.

*Question.* In your assessment, what are the priority investments the Department of the Air Force could make that would help implement the National Defense Strategy in the Indo-Pacific?

*Answer.* With China's increasing threat and capability in the Indo-Pacific region, the DAF will have to operate in a highly contested environment, characterized by a complex web of overlapping integrated air and space defense systems. Investments in asymmetric capabilities will create a more resilient and adaptable force augmenting the DAF's credible deterrent against China and other potential adversaries in an increasingly complex and challenging security environment.

USAF investments in prepositioned munitions and petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL) are also crucial for maintaining logistical support in contested environments. Furthermore, improving overall force readiness, modernizing the force, developing collaborative combat aircraft (CCAs), conducting joint and combined training with Allies & partners, and establishing resilient command and control systems are vital steps to strengthen the USAF's agility and effectiveness in the region.

USSF investment priorities focus on achieving space superiority through space control. Supporting and underpinning these capabilities, the USSF requires the systems and sufficient baseline force structure and enabling capabilities such as space domain awareness, warfighting manpower, infrastructure, facilities, security, and realistic testing and training.

*Question.* What is your current assessment of the risk of operational failure in a conflict with China as a result of a critical logistics failure?

*Answer.* The risk of operational failure due to logistical challenges in a conflict with China is a serious concern. The DAF modern Force relies on highly complex and interconnected supply chains for everything from ammunition and fuel to spare parts and advanced technology. Potential adversaries, like China, have the capability to threaten our logistics hubs and supply lines, which are essential for sustaining military operations. This requires improvement to DAF distributed logistics, base resilience, and prepositioned supplies. We also need to consider how to better leverage our Allies and Partners.

*Question.* In your opinion, what role will Guam play in a conflict with China? Do you believe Guam's infrastructure is currently adequate to support the current and future mission?

*Answer.* In my opinion, Guam is a critical forward location that enables the projection and sustainment of airpower from the frontlines of the Indo-Pacific, bolstering the USAF's posture west of the International Date Line. My understanding is that significant infrastructure improvements have already been made at Andersen, but further enhancements including ongoing upgrades to its airfields, increasing support facilities, and expanding fuel and munitions storage capacity are vital to ensure robust resiliency and operational continuity in contested environments.

*Question.* What is your view of the role of unmanned systems in deterring conflict in the Taiwan Strait?

*Answer.* The Taiwan Strait is a highly contested and sensitive region, and the potential that China would use military aggression against Taiwan remains a significant concern for regional and global stability. Unmanned systems play a critical role in deterring conflict in the region, but the systems' effectiveness depends on addressing the challenges and limitations associated with their use. A comprehensive approach that includes developing advanced unmanned systems, improving command and control, enhancing cybersecurity and resiliency, and integrating unmanned systems with other warfighting capabilities is key to maximizing their potential.

#### EUROPE

*Question.* What are the key areas in which the Air Force must improve to provide the necessary capabilities and capacity to the Joint Force to deter Russian aggression and, if necessary, prevail in a potential conflict with Russia?

*Answer.* The Air Force must work with our NATO Allies to ensure that the Alliance has the capability and capacity to deter Russian aggression and if necessary, prevail in conflict. The Air Force's ability to project power globally is a decisive factor in deterring our peer adversaries. Reviving our defense industrial base and rapidly fielding emerging technologies are key to sustaining the Air Force's speed, agility, and lethality.

*Question.* In your view, are there investments the Air Force should prioritize for the competition with Russia below the level of direct military conflict in order to counter Russian malign influence and hybrid warfare operations?

*Answer.* The USAF will need to work with NATO to ensure that our Europe Allies are capable of deterring and countering Russian malign influence, including hybrid warfare operations. We will prioritize guiding European investments in these areas.

*Question.* How do you assess the Air Force's current posture to support operations in Europe?

*Answer.* The U.S. Air Force is postured to support operations in Europe with a diverse and capable force, including forward-based squadrons and high-end capabilities like the F-35. Integration with NATO Allies is strong and has steadily improved in recent years. However, the evolving threat environment, particularly from Russia, necessitates continuous force posture assessment and potential adjustments to ensure the long-term capability to deter and, if necessary, defeat aggression.

#### ACQUISITION

*Question.* Civilian oversight of the acquisition system has been a cornerstone of the post-World War Two acquisition system.

What are your personal views on the principle of civilian control of the defense acquisition system?

*Answer.* I believe civilian control of our military is fundamental to our system of government and I place that same premium on our defense acquisitions system. It requires a collaborative effort between military, civilian, and industry stakeholders to deliver the capabilities our warfighters need on time and within resources. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of the Air Force's Senior Acquisition Execu-

tives to increase innovation, streamline and accelerate the acquisition process, and ensure cost, schedule, and performance goals are maintained.

*Question.* Congress has expanded and refined the acquisition-related functions of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the Chief of Space Operations, and the other Service Chiefs.

If confirmed, how would you synchronize your acquisition responsibilities and those of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology and those of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Chief of Space Operations?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would ensure continuous collaboration and transparent communication with SAF/AQ, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and the Chief of Space Operations to synchronize acquisition efforts with operational priorities. This unity of effort will enable us to deliver effective and timely capabilities that support the operational needs of the joint force and maintain strategic advantage.

*Question.* Congress has authorized a range of authorities, including the Middle Tier of Acquisition authority, rapid acquisition authority, and the software acquisition pathway, to tailor the acquisition process to enable the rapid delivery of new capabilities.

In your view, what benefit has the Department of the Air Force derived from its utilization of Middle Tier of Acquisition authorities?

*Answer.* In my view, the MTA pathway benefits the Department of the Air Force by allowing for rapid prototyping and fielding of capabilities within 2–5 years, delivering new technologies to the warfighter faster.

*Question.* In your view, what benefit has the Department of the Air Force derived from its utilization of the rapid acquisition authority?

*Answer.* The Department of the Air Force benefits from rapid acquisition authorities by accelerating the development, acquisition, and fielding of critical combat capabilities, enabling the DAF to deliver warfighting capabilities faster without the more bureaucratic traditional acquisition processes.

*Question.* How will you ensure that rapid acquisition pathways are not inundated with unnecessary or unwarranted bureaucratic processes?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to utilizing and accelerating these hard-won pathways. Having these tools is critical to getting more capability to the warfighter faster. If confirmed, I will scrutinize any barriers to these novel and promising pathways and will continue to streamline processes.

*Question.* How will you seek to balance the need to rapidly acquire and field innovative systems while ensuring acquisition programs provide effective capabilities for the joint force?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to streamline the requirements and acquisition process. I will ensure our acquisition programs provide meaningful and effective capabilities for the Joint force while leveraging all acquisition authorities and flexibilities to deliver at speed and scale. If confirmed, I will also ensure we have the necessary policies in place to strengthen the health of the defense industrial base.

*Question.* Based on your experience, how would you structure the Air Force to conduct better tradeoff analysis so that programmatic investments are not stove-piped and can be assessed against the impact of various alternatives?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure our approaches allow mission and capability informed decisions. Both the Section 809 Panel and PPBE commission have called for a portfolio-based approach to making acquisition decisions. If confirmed, I will work to move the DAF from system-by-system analysis approach to a mission informed capability portfolio approach.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the adequacy with which the Air Force has been transitioning nontraditional defense contractors from research and development into production contracts? What steps, if any, would you take to improve the Air Force's ability to do business with nontraditional defense contractors?

*Answer.* To my knowledge, the DAF has been focused on lowering barriers to entry and promoting competition and has made progress, with the Collaborative Combat Aircraft Program being a very important example. If confirmed, I will continue lowering of barriers to entry for nontraditional defense contractors. Our Acquisition Strategies and the incentives they create should recognize bold investment in R&D, increased capacity options, and increased competitive opportunities enabling more opportunities and competition for nontraditional contractors.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the sufficiency of the Air Force acquisition workforce across both civilian and military personnel, both in the number and the level of experience of those personnel? What do you see as the benefits or disadvantages of civilian versus military acquisition professionals?

Answer. I believe the single most important factor in acquisition success is the skill of the government team. As I understand it, the Airmen and Guardians within the Acquisition Workforce are some of the best and brightest in the Department of the Air Force. Our unified Acquisition workforce, military and civilians, are invaluable to the warfighter and our overall readiness. If confirmed, I will work with military and civilian leadership to ensure our acquisition workforce has the professionalism and competency required for success.

#### REQUIREMENTS

*Question.* The Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act required the Joint Staff to take a clean-sheet approach to the requirements process and the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act required the Secretary of Defense to establish an advisory panel on reforming the requirements process.

What recommendations would you make to the requirements process to make it more adaptive to changes in threats and technologies?

Answer. For the United States Space Force, top-level requirements need to be written in broad mission areas which allows the acquisition community to decompose them in ways that allow for rapid technological insertion, increased adaptation of commercial capabilities, and the flexibility to trade performance for speed in certain circumstances. I believe a robust discussion of the reforms proposed in the FoRGED Act and the report directed under Section 811 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 will allow the Military Services to work with Congress on potential process reforms. Reducing Quick Action Requirement (QAR) restrictions at the Joint Staff and service level, while also allowing for budgetary flexibility, will best posture Combatant Commanders for success in the current national security environment.

*Question.* What role do you see for the Joint Staff versus the military services in the requirements process?

Answer. The Joint Staff ensures the voices of all Services and Combatant Commands are taken into consideration and manages the process of joint requirements development. The Space Force has unique authorities in the requirements process due to the designation of the CSO as Force Design Architect for the Armed Forces, and as the Joint Space Integrator, which provide him broad latitude to capture and satisfy joint warfighting gaps that can be filled with space capabilities along with developing Service specific requirements.

The Joint Staff will act as the integrator for service needs, meaning ensuring the services are working together to provide the effective mission solutions as a joint team. Furthermore, the JS must provide oversight, ensuring the voice of the joint warfighter is front and center in the requirements process.

#### TEST AND EVALUATION

*Question.* Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe it appropriate to procure weapons systems and equipment that have not been demonstrated through test and evaluation to be operationally effective and operationally suitable?

Answer. Generally, I believe that limited initial production should be utilized to support formal operational testing. Developmental production prototypes should, to some extent, be employed for developmental testing before making a production decision. However, this approach is highly dependent on the urgency of the operational requirement and the nature of the system being acquired. In certain cases, it may be appropriate to procure weapon systems and equipment that have not undergone full testing and evaluation. This applies when there is an urgent and clearly defined warfighter need, the technical risk is low, the system has been demonstrated in some capacity (including cybersecurity), and the planned procurement is limited. Nevertheless, a basic level of safety, cybersecurity, and performance should typically be validated before the system is fielded.

*Question.* What do you see as the role of the developmental and operational test and evaluation communities with respect to rapid acquisition, spiral acquisition, and other streamlined acquisition processes?

Answer. I believe these communities play a critical role in ensuring the timely deployment of systems that deliver operational advantages to our warfighters while meeting their requirements. For any program, regardless of its structure, the sequencing and content of testing should be customized to the specific program, considering factors such as technical and operational risks, the urgency of operational needs, and the efficiency of the testing process.

*Question.* Are you satisfied with Air Force test and evaluation capabilities? In which areas, if any, do you feel the Air Force should be developing new test and evaluation capabilities?

*Answer.* To maintain our military edge, we must be able to test and evaluate our systems as effectively as we build them. That means a sustained commitment to modernizing our test infrastructure across the board. We need to invest in cutting-edge technologies, expand and connect our ranges and develop a secure digital test environment while cultivating our workforce. This is not just about keeping pace; it is about staying ahead in critical areas like autonomy, artificial intelligence, and multi-domain operations. Without these investments, we risk fielding systems that are untested and unreliable.

*Question.* Do you believe that current Air Force test and evaluation facilities and personnel and technical test apparatuses are up to par for what is needed for the modernization challenges of the Air Force, now and in the near future?

*Answer.* In my opinion, our current test and evaluation capabilities in facilities, personnel, and test apparatuses require constant investments to keep pace with the Air Force's modernization agenda. While we have a dedicated and innovative workforce, the reality is that aging facilities and retaining a highly skilled workforce challenges our ability to effectively test and field the next generation of advanced systems. If confirmed, the Air Force will remain committed to maintaining Test and Evaluation investment to meet the demands of future conflict.

*Question.* What do you see as the operational test and evaluation needs for testing non-developmental or commercial items to ensure they can still meet the technical requirements, and human factor needs of environments often more complex and demanding than commercial settings?

*Answer.* As I understand it, the Air Force is committed to leveraging the innovation of commercial technologies wherever possible, but it must never compromise on ensuring those systems are truly ready for the demands of military operations. While we can buy it off-the-shelf, that does not mean it is combat-ready. Both commercial and military items must be rigorously tested in realistic missions with the actual warfighters.

*Question.* How many Air Force developmental or operational test and evaluation facilities are accredited for TS/SCI discussion and processing?

*Answer.* My understanding is the Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center (AFOTEC) currently manages 12 facilities with the necessary accreditation for Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI) discussions. On the developmental test and evaluation (DT&E) side, the Air Force Test Center currently has 7.13 million square feet of classified facility space with 22 facilities.

*Question.* How many Air Force test and evaluation personnel designing tests are accessed to the OPLANs that their programs are designed to support? How will you ensure your testing is operationally representative if the personnel designing tests do not know the use cases for the equipment?

*Answer.* Understanding the operational environment and operational employment is critical to ensure a well-structured test approach. I do not have access to that level of personnel data to assess if the workforce has the appropriate access, but if confirmed I will ensure they do.

*Question.* Will the Integrated Capabilities Command (ICC) have the authority to cancel programs that perform poorly in testing or whose need has been overcome by events?

*Answer.* If the need for a capability in development is overcome by events and/or the requirement for such a capability is no longer valid, ICC will coordinate with the A5/7 and make recommendations to the VCSAF via the Air Force Requirements Oversight Council. ICC oversees capability development, and if an ICC-proposed solution to a valid requirements performs poorly in testing, those results are presented to the AFROC for AF senior leadership to decide whether to continue the program. Service Component Commands (and serviced Combatant Command): Air Mobility Command (USTRANSCOM); Air Force Global Strike Command (USSTRATCOM); United States Air Forces Europe (USEUCOM and USAFRICOM); Pacific Air Forces (USINDOPACOM); Air Forces North / Air Force Space Command (USNORTHCOM and USSPACECOM); Air Force Special Operations Command (USSOCOM); Air Forces Southern (USSOUTHCOM); Air Forces Central (USCENTCOM).

*Question.* What do you believe should be the relationship between the major commands of the Air Force and the ICC, and how will you ensure the commander of the major commands will be able to execute the mission assigned to them under various operational plans developed by the combatant commands?

*Answer.* My understanding is the AF is planning to move toward streamlining its top-level commands into two types: institutional and service component. Institutional Commands are responsible for the organization, training, equipping and presenting ready Air Forces to Service Component Commands, which then employ those forces IAW the orders of the Combatant Commander to which they serve as

the Air Component. By realigning this way, commanders are given the authority to wholly own their respective function and do not face the conflicts of interest which arise between trying to modernize their force while simultaneously employing it. The ICC will work closely with MAJCOMs, Institutional Commands, and Service Component Commands (MAJCOM/I/SCCs) on synchronizing AF modernization needs with sustainment requirements to achieve mission and system integration. The ICC will develop and validate operational concepts and align capability development efforts to build a combat-credible force, capable of achieving National Defense Strategy (NDS) objectives alongside joint, allied, and partner forces. The ICC will prioritize modernization investments, including associated depot activation investments and develop narratives to influence planning and programming choices integrated by design to achieve maximum efficiency and efficacy in the USAF Strategy, Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (SPPBE) corporate process.

*Question.* Do you believe there are enough full-scale aerial targets to execute test plans for current and future programs?

*Answer.* My understanding is we face a serious challenge in aerial target capabilities. Inventory is shrinking while the sophistication needed for these systems continues to increase. This gap threatens the ability to effectively test and field next-generation weapons. If confirmed, I will work with the Department of Defense to explore solutions, including potential replacements.

*Question.* The Air Force has shifted focus to beyond line of sight kill chains rather than individual weapons systems. The test community has not yet pivoted to testing the entire process in full.

How will you ensure adequate test and evaluation of the long-range kill chain “system of systems” in total rather in separate pieces?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure the Air Force remains committed to rigorously testing the Long-Range Kill Chain as a complete system, not just individual parts. We will do this by using realistic scenarios, leveraging advanced test capabilities like expanded ranges and modeling/simulation, and closely coordinating developmental and operational testing. Our goal is to ensure the Long-Range Kill Chain is effective, resilient, and fully integrated into a multi-domain fight, giving our warfighters a decisive advantage.

#### AUDIT

*Question.* If confirmed, what specific actions will you take or direct to enable the Air Force to achieve a clean financial audit in the most expedited fashion?

*Answer.* The Department of the Air Force continues to make significant progress with audit as roughly 70 percent of their general fund balance sheet is considered audit ready. If confirmed, I would make audit a top priority and continue to push for accelerated results by taking advantage of industry tools and software that can enable rapid acceleration on audit activities.

*Question.* What are the benefits to Air Force missions and effectiveness of achieving and maintaining a clean audit?

*Answer.* The annual audit remains a catalyst for positive change, boosting mission readiness, while transforming and streamlining how we operate. The pursuit to obtain and maintain a clean audit opinion has fueled the Department of the Air Force to enhance accountability over assets (e.g., aircraft, munitions, satellites, engines, and property), which directly impacts the DAF mission and warfighters’ effectiveness.

*Question.* How will you hold Department of the Air Force leaders and organizations responsible and accountable for making the necessary investments and changes to correct findings and material weaknesses identified in the audit process?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will establish a culture of audit accountability within the Department of the Air Force. This includes a new governance approach, stringent timelines for senior leader remediation efforts, and targeted investments to expedite our path to an unmodified audit opinion by the 2028 congressional mandate.

*Question.* Based on your experience, how do you see improved data from Air Force financial management IT systems that support audit help Air Force decision-making and readiness?

*Answer.* Improved data from auditable financial management IT systems will better inform communication of our readiness posture, (e.g., what assets we have and what condition they are in), enhance budget accuracy to focus on actual needs, and enable stronger negotiation positions with vendors to meet mission needs cost-effectively.

## NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE

*Question.* The Air Force is responsible for maintaining and operating two legs of the nuclear triad, including its nuclear weapons and the majority of the 107 nuclear command, control and communications systems that link the President to the nuclear forces. There have been a number of troubling incidents since 2007, including the inadvertent transportation of six nuclear armed AGM-86 cruise missiles without authorization by a B-52 from Minot Air Force Base to Barksdale Air Force Base, and the shipment of ICBM fuses to Taiwan. These actions resulted in a loss of confidence and dismissal of the two senior leaders of the Air Force, both the Secretary and the Chief of Staff. In 2014, the entire wing of combat missileers at Malmstrom Air Force Base was decertified after leaders uncovered a proficiency exam cheating incident. It was later determined that this cheating activity was partially due to low morale and a shortage of qualified missileers to perform the long hours deployed in remote CONUS locations under harsh weather. These incidents resulted in number of reviews, including a DOD enterprise review in 2014 by Secretary Hagel. The reviews resulted in such actions as creation of Air Force Global Strike Command, and its elevation to a four-star command, and the establishment of a Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration (A10).

What are your overall views on responsibility of the Secretary of the Air Force as regards the nuclear enterprise?

*Answer.* As denoted in Title 10, the Secretary through the Chief of Staff of the Air Force ensures the safety, security, reliability, effectiveness and credibility of the nuclear deterrence mission of the Air Force. If confirmed, this is one of the most important responsibilities I have, and one I will take very seriously.

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions will you take to oversee the continued implementation of these reforms of the nuclear-focused organizational and personnel systems?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I first would assess the status of these reforms to see if the Department of the Air Force adequately implemented them and then ask for an evaluation of the success of these reforms to see if they had a positive impact.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would be your approach to ensure these nuclear-related systems are adequately resourced?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will take a keen interest in monitoring how the Department of the Air Force resources their nuclear enterprise within its corporate processes to ensure the nuclear enterprise receives sufficient resources to maintain the safety, security, reliability, effectiveness and credibility of the Air Force nuclear deterrence mission.

*Question.* Will you commit that, if confirmed, you will personally visit Air Force nuclear facilities and bases to gain an in-depth understanding of both the infrastructure, hardware, and especially how our airmen operate, maintain and secure them?

*Answer.* Yes. Strategic and nuclear deterrence are a top priority for Department of the Air Force and, if confirmed, I commit to personally visiting the Airmen in the field who execute this mission 24/7 to ensure they have the resources and facilities to execute this critical mission.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to preserving the unique role of Air Force Global Strike Command within the Air Force nuclear enterprise and ensuring its structure reflects the command's responsibility for two legs of the Nation's strategic nuclear triad and over 70 percent of the DOD's nuclear command, control, and communications capabilities?

*Answer.* The nuclear deterrence capability provided by the USAF underpins global stability and our National Defense Strategy, and it will remain our utmost priority. Over the last 16 years, Air Force Global Strike Command has unfailingly ensured a safe, secure, reliable, and credible nuclear deterrent, and will continue to play a key role in the evolving geopolitical landscape of Great Power Competition. I understand that we are currently reviewing efforts initiated by the previous Administration to realign USAF force structure for GPC and will pay careful consideration to any proposed changes to Air Force Global Strike Command structure. While some changes may occur, if confirmed, I will be dedicated to ensuring that no efforts will negatively impact the USAF's ability to continue fielding and modernizing our significant portion of the nuclear triad and strategic communication capabilities.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that Air Force Global Strike Command has the capability, resources, training and organizational structure to meet the operational requirements of U.S. Strategic Command to deter nuclear escalation?

**Answer.** Yes. If confirmed, I will ensure the Air Force Global Strike command has the resources and authorities to meet its Service Component responsibilities in support of the USSTRATCOM mission.

**Question.** The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) reaffirmed long-held American doctrine to maintain the Nation's nuclear triad of land-, sea-, and air-based capabilities.

Do you agree that modernizing each leg of the nuclear triad and the Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons complex is a critical national security priority?

**Answer.** Yes, a robust and modern nuclear deterrent is the cornerstone of our national security, and it is essential that we invest in its modernization to stay ahead of emerging threats and maintain our strategic edge. If confirmed I will assess the status and provide the needed advocacy to continue to have a capable, and ready nuclear deterrent.

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

**Answer.** To the best of my knowledge, the current program of record outlines a comprehensive plan for modernizing the nuclear triad, including delivery systems, warheads, and infrastructure. Upon confirmation, I intend to conduct a comprehensive review of the Department of the Air Force's existing nuclear weapon systems and modernization initiatives to identify the best ways to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent, which is essential for our national security.

**Question.** The Minuteman III ICBM is decades beyond its planned service life and must be replaced by the Sentinel ICBM if the U.S. is to retain a triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems. However, the Sentinel program has encountered significant issues over the past year, culminating with a Nunn-McCurdy breach.

Do you support the current program of record for the Sentinel ICBM, and if confirmed, will you advocate for fully funding the program?

**Answer.** I understand that in Summer 2024, the Sentinel program was certified as essential to U.S. national security, and that the Department directed the DAF to restructure the program. If confirmed, I commit to following the recommendations from the Nunn-McCurdy certification. The ground leg of the nuclear triad—Minuteman III and, over time, Sentinel—are foundational to strategic deterrence and defense of the Homeland.

If confirmed, I commit to exploring ways in which the program may be able to regain schedule and reduce cost. Ultimately, the success of this program will be a coordinated effort among the whole of government (DoD, DOE, Commerce, OPM), industry, and our civil communities, all working together to complete the most massive national-defense modernization effort in this century.

**Question.** Do you support the current program of record for the Long-Range Stand Off weapon and if confirmed, will you advocate for fully funding the program?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I will carefully review the status of the LRSO program to ensure that it is postured to deliver the deterrence capability that the Nation needs on schedule and that is properly funded.

**Question.** What are your views on expanding production of the B-21 bomber?

**Answer.** The B-21 is a critical capability in the Air Force's nuclear modernization effort that will form the backbone of the Nation's future bomber force and provide both conventional and nuclear capability.

A penetrating bomber, like the B-21, is an important and unique capability for the United States. I understand the B-21 program is currently meeting its goals, we should look carefully at the total numbers of the long-term bomber force, comprised of B-21s and modernized B-52s.

If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the details and status of the B-21 program and working closely with senior Air Force leaders to assess the total number of B-21s required to meet the needs of the Joint Force.

**Question.** What are your views on reconverting the full B-52 fleet back to be nuclear-capable once the New START Treaty expires?

**Answer.** It is my understanding the Air Force has assessed what it would take to reconvert the full B-52 fleet back to nuclear-capable. If confirmed, I will review this assessment and ensure the Air Force is postured and responsive to Presidential direction.

**Question.** The Air Force owns and operates the majority of the 107 nuclear command, control and communications systems. Major reforms have been put in place at U.S. Strategic Command to set future requirements, while the Undersecretary for Acquisition and Sustainment oversees the acquisition of new capabilities to replace existing systems.

What are your views on the adequacy of the current Air Force nuclear, command, control and communications systems?

Answer. Maintaining a safe, secure, reliable, effective and credible deterrent to include nuclear command, control and communications (NC3) systems is a top U.S. national security priority. If confirmed I will assess the status of the Department of the Air Force's current NC3 systems and evaluate how they ensure a safe, secure, reliable, effective and credible deterrent.

*Question.* Do you support the current organizational approach to the acquisition and management oversight of the modernization of nuclear command, control and communications?

Answer. If confirmed, I will conduct a thorough review of the programs to modernize nuclear command, control, and communications and the management structures of these efforts.

*Question.* The E-4B National Airborne Operations Center utilizes an aging 747-200 platform that must be replaced in the 2030's to ensure the capability and continuity of a number of essential missions including nuclear, command, control and communications.

What are your views on the Survivable Airborne Operations Center program to replace this platform?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the status of the Survivable Airborne Operations Center program to ensure that it is postured to deliver the critical capability of a highly survivable command, control, and communications center.

#### AIR FORCE PROGRAMS

*Question.* What is your understanding and assessment of the research, development, and acquisition programs supporting Air Force modernization?

Answer. The Department of the Air Force must ensure a mission focused methodology to prioritize research and development investment, including science and technology, prototyping, and experimentation resources. If confirmed, I will pursue a portfolio approach that is both risk and mission informed and balances R&D investment across near-and long-term needs and aligned with National Defense Strategy priorities.

*Question.* Where do you believe the greatest gaps remain between required and current capability in both the Air and Space Forces?

Answer. The greatest gap between required and current capability is a matter of both scope and scale. The USSF needs to continue developing offensive and defensive space control capabilities to successfully prosecute a war in space and to conduct operations at a time and place of our choosing. Additionally, we need to enhance our resilience, a trend that is already underway, with proliferated constellations, additional commercial capability, and increased protection against advanced kinetic and non-kinetic threats.

The USAF is in the middle of modernizing all core mission areas, which need to be successful to maintain a force capable of deterring all potential adversaries and win decisively if deterrence fails.

*Question.* The Air Force is on record as needing to purchase a minimum of 72 fighter aircraft per year to maintain requisite force structure.

If confirmed, how would you plan to meet that minimum?

Answer. The previous Administration determined a minimum of 72 fighter aircraft per year. If confirmed, I would work with my Service Chief to reassess the current fighter aircraft requirement based upon the priorities of the President and Secretary of Defense. Once we've determined the necessary fighter aircraft levels, we must then hold the aircraft industry accountable in producing the contracted number of aircraft on time and in accordance with the combat mission requirements of each aircraft. Readiness is my priority along with modernizing our combat force to deter and if required . . . win conflict.

*Question.* In your opinion, what is the optimum mix of 4th and 5th generation aircraft required to meet the threat outlined in the 2022 NDS?

Answer. The Air Force requires sufficient 4th and 5th generation aircraft located and suited to their capabilities. Fourth generation aircraft have many roles to play, and where those roles exist, they should be performed by 4th generation—not 5th generation—aircraft in order to preserve 5th generation aircraft for missions only they can perform. From a capabilities' perspective, our 4th Generation aircraft still have an active role to play in all but the densest and most advanced threat environments around the world. Where the threat increases, specifically as we move closer to Chinese mainland, the integration of 5th generation capabilities becomes more important. But the question of fighter fleet composition isn't just about capability, it's also about managing the overall health of an aging aircraft fleet. We need to continually replace 4th generation fighters with 5th generation fighters over time,

not just to address a growing, proliferating adversary threat, to efficiently and effectively manage readiness and sustainment over the coming decades.

*Question.* Given the importance of extending the range of U.S. aircraft, what do you believe to be the overall tanker requirement for the Air Force and at what rate and on what schedule must the Air Force procure the new tankers to attain that requirement?

*Answer.* The U.S. Air Force's ability to rapidly deploy forces and conduct operations globally hinges on aerial refueling. Tankers extend the range and endurance of fighter jets, bombers, reconnaissance aircraft, and cargo planes. Maintaining a robust and adaptable force capable of meeting the demands of a rapidly evolving security environment will be crucial to a future fight against our adversaries.

Tankers must refuel receivers where they need gas, when they need it to ensure the Joint Force can deter adversaries. Additionally, many studies show the Joint Force benefits having tankers equipped with battlespace and situational awareness to maneuver around threats and use on-aircraft survivability to persist.

*Question.* Large-scale exercises such as Red Flag have illustrated that 5th generation fighters such as the F-22 and F-35 need to fly against multiple adversary aircraft to conduct much of their required training. The Air Force has taken a number of steps to address shortages in adversary air, including using contract air and requiring units to supply their own adversary air.

What are your views as to the appropriate balance of contract and organic adversary air capability? If confirmed, how would you ensure that the Air Force properly addresses the challenges associated with the availability of adversary air to ensure that its 5th generation fighters are properly trained and ready for combat?

*Answer.* Optimally, the Air Force would generate all adversary air organically through a mix of unit generated sorties and a professional aggressor force. My understanding is that currently, and for the foreseeable future, our aircraft availability rates, and Instructor Pilot manning requires the Air Force to augment our capacity with contract adversary air capabilities. If confirmed, I will pursue a professional 5th generation aggressor force balanced with funding contract adversary air to support Air Force pilot production, absorption and readiness commensurate with budget priorities.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the readiness of the Air Force heavy bomber fleet? As to each of the airframes listed below, what improvements should be made to increase airframe readiness?

- B-1
- B-52
- B-2

At this time, I am not aware of the specific challenges of each airframe; therefore, I am not in a position to identify necessary improvements that would enhance the readiness of the bomber fleet. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Gen Allvin and the Air Force leadership to support the readiness of our bomber fleet.

#### MUNITIONS

*Question.* Air Force munitions inventories—particularly for precision guided munitions and air-to-air missiles—have declined significantly due to high operational usage, insufficient procurement, poor program execution, and a requirements system that does not adequately account for the ongoing need to transfer munitions to our allies.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure the Air Force has sufficient inventories of munitions to meet the needs of Combatant Commanders?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would review the procurement plans with an aim to fund procurement of critical weapons at maximum annual production capacities and, where capacity is insufficient, to expand production capacity to meet requirements. I would also explore options to leverage affordable mass weapons and expand the munitions production capacity as a whole.

*Question.* What changes in budgeting and acquisition processes would you recommend facilitating faster Air Force munitions replenishment rates?

*Answer.* Delivery lead times are the biggest source of delays in rapid replenishment of munitions. If confirmed, I would review existing processes and explore opportunities to reduce lead times including use of advance procurement, multi-year procurement, and industrial base initiatives to expand the number of qualified sources for key weapon components.

*Question.* In your view, how should the Air Force adapt to self-imposed DOD restrictions on area attack and denial munitions, consistent with the Ottawa Agreements?

*Answer.* To my knowledge, the United States has never signed nor ratified the Ottawa Treaty. If confirmed, I will ensure the Air Force complies with directions from the Secretary of Defense including limitations on munitions.

*Question.* Based on your experience, how should the Air Force be factoring in the needs of foreign partners and allies into overall munitions forecasting in order to improve the long-term production stability of the industrial base?

*Answer.* The Air Force will work with our Allies and partners to project their long-term munitions requirements and encourage them to formally submit these requirements to us. This demand signal would represent a commitment that the U.S. industrial base can use to build production capacity and work with 2d and 3d tier suppliers to meet demand. Additionally, for long-term production stability, the Air Force needs to contract for multiyear weapons procurements. By ensuring predictable demand, we allow industry to invest in the infrastructure, workforce, and supply chain resilience necessary to accommodate increased production and support Secretary Hegseth's goal of reviving the defense industrial base.

*Question.* The FY24 NDAA required the Department of Defense to establish a pilot program to incorporate CL-20 into existing munitions.

Is the Air Force considering executing any activities under this pilot in order to improve the explosive yield or operational envelope of any of its munitions?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review how the Air Force is examining the utility of CL-20 to improve the performance of existing munitions and for weapons currently in development, with the intent to maximize effectiveness.

*Question.* Regardless of whether the Air Force is doing anything under this pilot program, how is the Air Force considering incorporation of new energetic materials, like CL-20, or new manufacturing processes for energetics, like biomanufacturing, into existing munitions to increase explosive effects or operational envelope of its weapons?

*Answer.* I understand the Air Force has ongoing research programs to investigate improvements in both warheads and missile propellants, for the purposes of increasing warhead effectiveness and missile range. If confirmed, I will ensure the Air Force is actively working with industry to identify, develop, and implement new ideas in these areas.

#### SPACE

*Question.* The United States is increasingly dependent on space, both economically and militarily—from the Global Positioning System on which many industries and military capabilities rely, to the missile warning systems that underpin U.S. nuclear deterrence. Our strategic competitors—China and Russia—are engaged in a concerted effort to leap ahead of U.S. technology and limit U.S. freedom of action in the space warfighting domain.

In your view, does the 2022 NDS accurately assess the strategic environment as it pertains to the domain of space?

*Answer.* The unclassified 2022 NDS recognizes the space domain as a key integrator for joint warfighting capabilities and emphasizes China's maturing space capabilities. Secretary Hegseth recently called space, "the next and the most important domain of warfare," and vowed to invest appropriately in both offensive and defensive space capabilities. If confirmed, I will ensure the next NDS prioritizes a secure space environment for the United States, its Allies, and its partners to empower a lethal and ready Joint Force and to reflect the environment's growing importance."

*Question.* In your view, what will "great power competition" look like in space and to what extent do you view China's and Russia's activities related to the space domain as a threat or challenge to U.S. national security interests?

*Answer.* China and Russia continue to use coercive and provocative tactics to threaten and undermine U.S. leadership. Because space is critical to American security, prosperity, and way of life, winning the competition in space and establishing space superiority is a crucial responsibility of the Department of the Air Force and the Joint Force. If confirmed, I will ensure that the United States pursues a robust force structure that includes capabilities for offensive and defensive space control missions to enable the Joint Force to achieve national security objectives through U.S. space superiority.

*Question.* Are there other nation-states or other actors operating in space that you perceive as a risk to the United States or as cause for concern? If so, why?

*Answer.* Access to space, space-based data, and space-enabled applications is becoming increasingly simple and streamlined for all actors. Both North Korea and Iran, for example, have continued to press forward with their space programs, and even if they may never rival the great powers in terms of scale, they will be able

to exploit the domain to their own ends and potentially employ counterspace technologies against us. Each of these two have already demonstrated the ability to jam satellite communications and GPS as well. Even without a robust space program, any actor, State or non-State, hostile or benign, can take advantage of space technology, whether it be precision navigation, global communications, imagery, weather, and much more with little more than a smartphone, potentially using these nominally neutral space capabilities to challenge U.S. interests. Last, as China continues to actively peddle its rapidly expanding space capabilities to the world—and the developing world in particular—the United States risks a loss of its presently dominant soft power in the domain, yielding that influence to Beijing.

*Question.* What specific actions would you take, if confirmed, to enhance existing Air Force acquisition policies and process to move space operations projects to orbit faster and cheaper?

*Answer.* Congress has already played a central role in fostering several changes, and the Department of Defense needs to stay focused on successfully implementing them. Specifically, space acquisitions need to shift from legacy practices of bespoke, siloed systems to integrating commercial space solutions into national security space architectures that drive new doctrine, strategy, force designs, capabilities, and operations. If confirmed, I will review the approach to space enterprise acquisition and work with Congress and the Department to implement any necessary reforms.

*Question.* The Space Force is now acquiring space systems for protect and defend missions, similar to any other weapon system of the Air Force.

Do you believe the Space Force is adequately structured and capable to acquire, test and evaluate these weapons systems to deliver the required effects of the combatant commands such as USSPACECOM, USINDOPACOM, or USEUCOM?

*Answer.* As space operations evolve to meet the demands of the emerging strategic environment, so too must the systems, processes, and activities intended to present credible combat capability. I believe that rigorous test and evaluation is a requirement to prove combat credibility of the weapons systems that the combatant commands will employ. If confirmed, I will ensure that our space acquisitions programs and test activities are aligned to the requirements of the combatant commands and that those capabilities will be rapidly delivered in a streamlined and transparent manner.

*Question.* What recommendations would you make to this acquisition and testing process to improve its effectiveness in supporting the combatant commands? What is your vision for the ideal relationship between the Space Force and the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO)? How will you minimize duplication of effort between the organizations?

*Answer.* As the NRO's Principal Deputy Director, I provided day-to-day management of the NRO, including the integration of intelligence capabilities to meet mission priorities. If confirmed, I would review the space acquisition structure, to include test and evaluation processes, with an eye toward streamlining decision-making and eliminating bureaucracy, to ensure that doctrine, strategy, and operations are all properly aligned to fully exploit the combined commercial and exquisite national capabilities of the United States. Further, I would prioritize a review of integration across the national security space enterprise, to include the Intelligence Community, using congressionally established bodies, to understand where greater integration may be achieved to effectively support combatant commands.

*Question.* In your role as Deputy Director of the NRO, and prior acquisition roles at the NRO before that, you developed close working and successful relationships with key space industries—a highly narrow and technically specialized area. However, as Secretary of the Air Force you will take on a much broader role overseeing the long-term success of the Air Force in multiple domains of conflict.

If confirmed, will you ensure that the Assistant Secretary for Space Acquisition and Integration exercises Air Force oversight of those day-to-day space acquisition and integration roles that you once held at the NRO in order to avoid any appearance of a possible conflict of interest with these key space industries that you once had at the NRO?

*Answer.* Yes, if confirmed, I would ensure that the Assistant Secretary for Space Acquisition and Integration exercises oversight of those day-to-day space acquisition and integration roles. I fully support the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration's role and responsibilities for quickly delivering space capabilities to the warfighter that are fully integrated with the Joint Force.

In addition, in my 30 years of acquisition and operations related leadership, I have worked with a large percentage of the U.S. Defense and Tech Industry base. Throughout that time, I have complied with all financial reporting requirements, received regular ethics training and consulted with General Council to ensure I was free from all conflict of interest concerns. I will continue this approach if confirmed.

## CYBER AND ELECTRONIC WARFARE

*Question.* Section 1657 of the fiscal year 2020 NDAA directed the appointment of an independent Principal Cyber Advisor (PCA) for each Military Department, to act as the principal advisor to the Secretary concerned on all cyber matters affecting that Department.

What do you see as the role of this position in the Air Force?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue to leverage the DAF Principal Cyber Advisor to advise my office, the CSAF, and CSO on all cyber matters concerning the DAF to include implementing the DOD Cyber Strategy and interim NDS within the DAF. Specifically, I will expect the PCA to coordinate and oversee the execution of the DAF's cyber budgeting, workforce, and operational policies as an independent advisor. This independence is critical to ensure I am fully informed of all views, and I will continue to use the PCA in this manner in addition to evaluating additional opportunities to integrate the PCA with other warfighting communities.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you plan to utilize the Air Force PCA as part of your leadership structure?

*Answer.* If confirmed as Secretary of the Air Force, the PCA would be a principal member of my staff providing independent consultation that cannot be found in other offices. If confirmed, I will maintain the PCA's position and role within the DAF's leadership structure and assess how it can be even further utilized.

*Question.* What are Air Force's top three cyber challenges, and how will you use the PCA to address them?

*Answer.* The PCA's office will serve as a principal office as we aim to tackle our 3 big challenges; how do we organize, train and equip. For a cyber engagement we look to novel solutions to keep up with current pacing threat. These cyber challenges are centered on our ability to present lethal forces to the joint fight. The PCA's role as an independent advisor is crucial to providing unbiased guidance on how best to solve these challenges for the DAF.

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

In your view, how well postured is the Air Force to meet the goals outlined in the 2023 Cyber Strategy? What actions would you take, if confirmed, to mitigate any gap between Air Force capacity and capability and Cyber Strategy goals?

*Answer.* To my knowledge, the 2023 cyber strategy identifies 4 LOEs, and the DAF's resourcing decisions directly align to supporting these LOEs by providing the best organized, trained, and equipped Airmen and Guardians. Mitigating gaps between current AF capacity and the cyber strategy may require reassessing current and future investment strategies. My staff will vigorously address any gaps based on a careful, data-driven assessment to identify the most effective COAs.

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions would you take to improve military and civilian cybersecurity career paths?

*Answer.* Protecting the American people and our critical infrastructure demands that we prioritize cybersecurity across all levels of government. Our dedicated military and civilian workforce are crucial to achieving this goal. If confirmed, I will champion the ongoing modernization and enhancement of our cyber workforce, both military and civilian. This includes streamlining career opportunities and deepening expertise through collaboration with private industry and academia. Additionally, we must continue coding cyber workforce roles to military and civilian classifications to ensure consistency of work performed by our cyber total force. We must improve talent management strategies and create new avenues for skilled professionals outside government to transition into public service. Furthermore, I will work with Congress and the Department of Defense to ensure we offer competitive incentives and targeted development programs that attract and retain the very best cybersecurity talent.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would you do to enhance Air Force information dominance capabilities?

*Answer.* Air and Space Force core missions depend on information dominance. As the Department of the Air Force looks to develop and deploy Joint All Domain Command and Control and Globally Integrated Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance capabilities, it must consider the interconnectedness of systems and the need for actionable information at the point where leaders must make time-sensitive operational decisions. Future operations will demand near real-time flow of timely, accurate, relevant tactical information over a global network without disruptive classification constraints or other barriers slowing or limiting effective sharing of information with Joint, Allied, and Coalition partners. If confirmed, I will strive to leverage partnerships and shared objectives to field high-priority information systems

to effectively optimize air and space power and enable our partners in the joint and combined force to meet national security objectives and priorities.

*Question.* If confirmed, specifically what measures would you take or direct to improve the cybersecurity culture across the Air Force workforce—military, civilian, and contractor? How would you empower and hold key leaders accountable for improvements in DOD cybersecurity?

*Answer.* I firmly believe cybersecurity is a shared responsibility, demanding vigilance from every member of our team, not just IT and cybersecurity professionals. If confirmed, I will empower the workforce with the knowledge to identify and mitigate risks, fostering a culture of shared responsibility for the security and defense of all systems and information. We will continue to embed cybersecurity considerations throughout the entire lifecycle of the acquisition process and prioritize investment to the most critical vulnerabilities. Accountability will be paramount, with cybersecurity breaches resulting from negligence in executing cybersecurity responsibilities carrying appropriate consequences. I will personally champion the inclusion of cybersecurity into all exercises and readiness inspections, using these evaluations to inform strategic investments and ensure our cyber defenses remain resolute. By prioritizing these areas, we'll create a culture of cybersecurity ownership, ensuring the Air Force remains ahead of evolving threats.

*Question.* What is your vision for the future of Air Force electronic warfare (EW) capabilities?

*Answer.* I understand that recently the Department published a policy establishing electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) superiority governance, management, capability development, operations and sustainment, and capability divestment. To counter this, the policy provides that the Department will restructure spectrum superiority across air, space, and cyberspace domains. The EMS is contested and dynamic, and our potential adversaries can deny us the freedom of maneuver and action essential to U.S. and multinational operations. To counter this, the policy provides that the Department will restructure and modernize the EW enterprise, cultivate a culture of EMS/EW awareness through robust training, doctrine development, and establish Air and Space Force Directorates to champion these efforts. Additionally, the Department's EMS superiority strategy aligns with national defense priorities outlined in the National Defense Strategy.

I believe electronic warfare (EW) is a critical warfighting capability and an area in which the Department of the Air Force must invest to ensure future operational superiority. As part of a joint and combined multi-domain force the Air Force and Space Force will need to focus EW capabilities on the broader electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) and joint capabilities. My view is that future battlefields will require an Air Force and Space Force with distributed software-defined systems and capabilities that are rapidly updatable that operate in coordination and jointly to maintain an advantage over any adversary. If confirmed, I would support EW as a priority and the introduction of new and innovative concepts and doctrine in this area.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the adequacy and efficacy of the EW training that Air Force personnel received in an Air Force environment in specific airframes? In a joint environment with other Military Services?

*Answer.* To my knowledge, the Department acknowledges the need to enhance operational, tactical-level and personnel-wide EMS operations (EMSO) training. The challenges are the EMS is finite, and the increasing demand from military, civilian, and commercial users create congestion. Training within the EMS is constrained by physics, technology, and policy which is governed by domestic and international law. Further discussion is needed between the Department and stakeholders to find solutions to provide a venue for realistic joint training opportunities while minimizing any impacts to other users.

*Question.* The Air Force is now re-invigorating the role of EW in the combat arms. It has stood up the 350th electronic warfare wing to ensure EW and Spectrum operations can perform their mission against a near peer adversary at speed and relevance. It has begun to acquire the EA-37B electronic warfare platform, which has the capability to perform EW and spectrum operations across multiple domains. Lacking however is the development of a dedicated career field devoted to EW and spectrum operations.

If confirmed, will you commit to review and report back to this committee on the role of EW and spectrum operations in the Air Force to ensure it is holistically integrated across multiple domains, whether the 350th EW wing can adequately support the EW platforms that the Air Force maintains and whether there should be a dedicated career field to this mission set?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will absolutely commit to reviewing the Department's electronic warfare and spectrum operations posture. This review will focus on ensuring holistic integration across multiple domains, evaluating the 350th Spectrum War-

fare Wing's capacity to support the Department's EW platforms, and assessing the feasibility and benefits of establishing a dedicated career field for this critical mission set.

#### AIR FORCE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you improve the Air Force's development and deployment of major IT systems, including business systems?

*Answer.* If confirmed, a top priority will be accelerating IT delivery to achieve critical operational effects. We will prioritize commercial solutions with minimal customization, particularly for business systems, to leverage existing innovation and drive efficiency. Additionally, we will embrace accelerated acquisition pathways, aiming to deliver operational capabilities in months instead of years, saving taxpayer dollars and ensuring our agencies have the tools they need to fulfill their missions effectively.

*Question.* In your view, what is the relationship between Air Force efforts to develop and implement enterprise IT programs and efforts being undertaken by the DOD Chief Information Office, the Defense Information Systems Agency, and other Defense Agencies?

*Answer.* To my understanding, the relationship between the Air Force's enterprise IT efforts and those of DOD CIO and DISA is deeply collaborative and aligned with shared goals. All are focused on streamlining IT functions and responsibilities to meet warfighter needs more efficiently, complementing broader DOD initiatives to eliminate redundancies and accelerate capability delivery. Empowering the Air Force CIO to deliver Enterprise IT services mirrors DISA's role in delivering consistent IT solutions across DOD, ensuring greater efficiency and alignment.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure that appropriate business process reengineering is accomplished before the Air Force initiates, develops, and deploys new business IT systems?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure our business systems are truly effective by integrating two key principles into their governance. First, we'll prioritize "business process reengineering," meaning we'll fundamentally rethink and optimize our own processes before considering developing new technologies. Second, after validating requirements, evaluating commercial solutions, and selecting a suitable and efficient software solution, we'll tailor our business processes to fit its strengths, not the other way around, to ensure we maximize the value of our IT investments and create systems that truly support our mission.

*Question.* Do you perceive a role for the Air Force research and testing enterprise in the development and deployment of Air Force business IT systems? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* Yes. While commercial solutions are essential, the Air Force's unique operational context sometimes requires specialized tools, such as those that address risks within our complex supply chain or optimize the sustainment of aging aircraft. Instead of relying solely on lengthy, traditional testing methods, we will prioritize a research-driven approach that embraces agile methodologies. This means emphasizing rapid prototyping, continuous feedback, and iterative development to deliver effective solutions in a fraction of the time.

#### AIR FORCE-RELATED DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

*Question.* What is your assessment of the systems and processes for identifying, evaluating, and managing risk in the Air Force's organic and commercial defense industrial base, including the munitions industrial base?

*Answer.* It is crucially important that the Air Force understands the defense industrial base and has the capability to manage industrial base risk. If confirmed, I look forward to advancing tools and processes that will best enable the Air Force to proactively identify supply chain risks and capacity bottle necks so that we can address them before a crisis.

*Question.* What do you see as the levers to motivate the defense industrial base to make additional capital investment (for facilities and tooling), as well as research and development investments to increase the capacity of the defense industrial base?

*Answer.* Capital will always flow toward return on investment, and a clear and consistent demand signal is what industry relies on to determine where that return on investment can be found. If confirmed, I will request continued support from Congress to provide stable funding, and I will work within the Air Force to incentivize capital investment in the industrial base. The tools I would use to do this include aggregating demand signals across programs, promoting multiple opportunities for competition throughout the life of programs, and identifying where di-

rect government investment in key industrial capabilities is needed. In the 1950's the Air Force Heavy Press Program built huge industrial capacity that our commercial industrial base has now relied on for decades. That type of big, bold investment may be needed again.

*Question.* How should Air Force acquisition leaders consider impacts on the industrial base when addressing requirements for recapitalization or modernization of major defense weapons systems and munitions?

*Answer.* A deep understanding of the industrial base is crucial for Air Force Acquisition leaders. If confirmed, I will ensure that acquisition strategies consider industrial base impacts and are aligned with an overall Air Force strategy to strengthen the Defense Industrial Base by promoting competition, lowering barriers to entry, and shaping incentives that drive strategic investment in capacity and bold R&D.

*Question.* How would you seek to ensure the Air Force engages with the broadest industrial base possible, including traditional contractors, nontraditional contractors, and small businesses?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will further develop mechanisms for the Air Force to work directly with contractors at all levels of the supply chain to include the small businesses that are crucial to delivering capability to our warfighters. I would support efforts to interact with industrial associations, State and local governments, and trade organizations to better understand the risks and constraints that our industrial base faces.

*Question.* If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you pursue in systems and processes to ensure that risk in the Air Force-relevant sectors of the defense industrial base is adequately managed to enable the development, production, and sustainment of technically superior, reliable, and affordable weapons systems and munitions?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work to advance the tools and processes that enable the Air Force to proactively identify industrial base risks and capacity bottle necks so that we can address them before a crisis. I would also challenge Air Force Acquisition leaders to ensure that acquisition strategies promote competition, leverage the benefits of Modular, Open Systems Architectures, and design in producibility. Production scale and surge capacity are crucial attributes of Air Force capabilities just like range, speed, and survivability.

#### OPERATIONAL ENERGY AND ENERGY RESILIENCE

*Question.* The Department defines operational energy as the energy required for training, moving, and sustaining military forces and weapons platforms for military operations, including the energy used by tactical power systems, generators, and weapons platforms. Department of Defense energy requirements are projected to increase due to technological advances in weapons systems and distributed operations over longer operating distances.

If confirmed, how would you lead the Air Force in harnessing innovations in operational energy and linking them with emerging joint operational concepts in order to reduce contested logistics vulnerabilities for warfighters?

*Answer.* If confirmed, reducing contested logistics vulnerabilities will be a high priority for me. If confirmed, I will ensure that the DAF is adequately supporting the development of more efficient aircraft with a focus on increasing combat capability and driving change where the greatest gains are possible. I will strengthen the linkages between DAF offices and industry to promote innovative energy concepts. I will particularly emphasize initiatives that maximize combat capability in contested domains, to support both current and future requirements.

*Question.* The Air Force is in the final phase of evaluation for microvane drag reduction technology on C-17s. Data shows that C-17s equipped with microvanes experience a 1 percent reduction in drag and fuel consumption compared to their unmodified counterparts. They yield a return on investment in 7 months.

Would you agree that microvanes are a low-cost, innovative, force multiplying capability that improve mobility?

*Answer.* To my understanding, the C-17 microvanes initiative has been undergoing research and evaluation over the last few years and has shown promise in being an innovative, low-cost, fuel-efficient enhancement to the fleet. If confirmed, I will conduct a review of C-17 microvanes to better understand the ongoing research efforts.

*Question.* In what specific areas, if any, do you believe the Air Force needs to improve the incorporation of energy considerations and alternative energy resources into the strategic planning processes?

Answer. Continually reducing the Air Force's operational energy costs and usage through alternative fuels and leveraging the benefits of technological advancements to improve operational energy efficiencies and lower the burden and dependency on fuels are an imperative. The Air Force must invest in critical capabilities and technologies, including alternative energy resources, to modernize the force to be more ready, efficient, and resilient. Our investments will target weapon systems, infrastructure, technology, and equipment that are demonstrably more efficient to improve the Air Force's warfighting capability tomorrow.

*Question.* How can Air Force acquisition systems better address requirements related to the use of energy in military platforms to decrease risks to warfighters?

Answer. The Department's acquisition processes can better address energy requirements in military platforms by considering energy as a foundational capability from day one. If confirmed, I will examine the incorporation of energy considerations into both initial capability development activities and throughout the acquisition life cycle.

*Question.* In your view, what steps can be taken to render "energy supportability that reduces contested logistics vulnerabilities" a key performance parameter in the requirements process, as compared to "check the box" consideration it is today?

Answer. I do not know the degree to which energy may be a "check the box" consideration today, but if confirmed I will ensure that energy considerations are taken seriously and measured when we plan for future scenarios. I will ensure appropriate emphasis is placed upon the Energy Key Performance Parameter, specifically by ensuring thorough analysis of campaign-level energy consumption and addressing expected logistics risks.

*Question.* How can the Department of the Air Force better integrate energy security and resilience as standard components of its Military Construction (MILCON) programs, in your view?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department pursues initiatives that standardize and integrate common sense energy security and resilience practices into Military Construction (MILCON) programs. They will be cost effective and promote installation survivability and recovery. I will ensure the DAF is taking a holistic approach to improve its MILCON program to build infrastructure able to withstand and recover from the spectrum of threats to assure mission success.

#### ENVIRONMENT

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you further efforts to address PFAS contamination at Air Force installations?

Answer. I am familiar with the PFAS issue, and, if confirmed, I will ensure the Department addresses PFAS impacts resulting from DAF mission activities. I will also ensure all DAF installations, including Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard installations, comply with all applicable congressional, Federal, and State and local laws and requirements. I am committed to ensuring the health and safety of our Airmen, Guardians, their families, and the communities in which they live and serve.

#### READINESS AND RESOURCE IMPACTS FROM EXTREME WEATHER

*Question.* How would you assess the readiness and resource impacts on the Air Force from recent extreme weather events?

Answer. Extreme weather events have degraded the Department of the Air Force's ability to operate and train. If confirmed, I will work to develop a full understanding of the national security implications of severe weather, taking a comprehensive approach that includes use of authorities, impacts on operations, installations, and infrastructure.

*Question.* Based on these readiness and resource impacts, do you believe it necessary to use more resilient designs in Air Force infrastructure? How can the Air Force better use existing authorities on extreme weather mitigation granted by Congress in the last few NDAAs?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will ensure the Department pursues initiatives that integrate common sense resilience practices into infrastructure planning. They will be cost effective and promote installation survivability and recovery. Severe weather impacts have degraded the Department of the Air Force's ability to operate and train. If confirmed, I will work to develop a full understanding of the national security implications of extreme weather, taking a comprehensive approach that includes fully utilizing the existing authorities granted by Congress in recent NDAAs.

## INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES

*Question.* Non-DOD funding mechanisms such as energy savings performance contracts, utility energy savings contracts, and power purchase agreements are excellent means by which the Air Force can improve infrastructure, increase resilience, reduced deferred maintenance, implement alternative energy resources, save taxpayer funds, and secure other benefits without the need for upfront appropriated funds.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to streamline the process for the identification and use of appropriate non-DOD infrastructure funding mechanisms, and how long would it take you to resume entering into contracts that benefit Air Force installations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department utilizes all available authorities, including third-party performance contracts, to enhance infrastructure resilience and energy security. I will work with OSD and the Department of Energy to identify opportunities to streamline processes and expedite solutions.

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION

*Question.* What are the key technologies that the Air Force should be focused on to support modernization activities?

Answer. Focused DOD-wide effort to advance and transition technology into modernized warfighting capability is critical to maintaining technological advantage. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department of the Air Force priorities remain consistent with the priorities of the President and Secretary of Defense.

*Question.* What do you see as the most significant challenges (e.g., technical, organizational, or cultural) to U.S. Air Force development of these key technologies?

Answer. The Department must accelerate adoption of new technology and innovation while ensuring timely delivery of capability needs. Total force modernization requires careful balance of investment across the broad spectrum of technology, development, production, and sustainment needs; as well as leadership, people and streamlined processes to drive change. If confirmed, I will continue efforts to expand our innovation base and provide opportunities for rapid prototyping and experimentation that enable the transition of new technologies to the field.

*Question.* How well has the Air Force prioritized limited research and development funding across its technology focus areas?

Answer. If confirmed, I will assess the DAF technology investment portfolio and work closely with the DOD Research and Engineering enterprise to leverage and partner on shared technology interests for delivery of warfighting capabilities aligned with the President's priorities.

*Question.* How is the Air Force balancing revolutionary capability advancements, including investments in basic research, as compared to "quick win" incremental improvements that can be rapidly fielded?

Answer. To maintain technological advantage, the Department of the Air Force must prioritize research and development investment to ensure long term competitive advantage. Development of cost-imposing disruptive capabilities, while delivering near term warfighting capability improvements to performance and lifecycle cost benefits are goals. If confirmed, I will ensure a balanced R&D investment that accomplishes these goals.

*Question.* In your view, what steps must DOD and the Air Force take to ensure that critical technical information is protected by Air Force organizations, industry, and academia?

Answer. We must protect against peer competitors that seek to exploit the openness that is the basis of our innovation and economic strength, while preserving critical national security interests. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department of the Air Force continues to implement fundamental research security and due diligence necessary to safeguard critical technologies, in accordance with government wide guidelines, and will continue working with our DOD partners and outside agencies to facilitate a comprehensive approach to mitigating exploitation of DAF R&D.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would you do to increase the interaction between Air Force labs and the private sector, and between Air Force labs and the rest of the DOD innovation enterprise (i.e., the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, Defense Innovation Unit, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and the other Military Services)?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with Air Force Research Labs, the DOD innovation enterprise, and the private sector to strengthen our innovation ecosystem. Our defense innovation base's strength relies on the collaborative efforts of these organizations and the exceptional talent, technical expertise, and competency they bring to the table.

*Question.* What are the challenges you perceive to effectively transitioning technologies from research programs into programs of record?

*Answer.* The “valley of death” between technology and programs of record is real and remains a continuing struggle. Challenges include the planning, programming, budgeting, and execution system driving investments 2 years into the future, and the risk incurred by programs of record to onboard technology insertion, especially programs that have not been designed with “open architectures” or pre-planned technology updates.

*Question.* How would you address these challenges, if confirmed?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will reinforce efforts to address technology transition by normalizing open standards and reference architectures as a basis of acquisition program structure, as well as emphasizing prototyping and experimentation opportunities for operational and technical stakeholder engagement that de-risk on-ramps to programs.

*Question.* Recent budget requests for defense science and technology (S&T) have fallen short of the Defense Science Board’s recommended goal of dedicating 3 percent of the total defense budget to S&T. Robust investment in S&T underpins technological advances in our military capabilities and is vital to maintaining our military technological superiority over emerging adversaries. However, over the past few years, the Air Force has prioritized near-term research and development over long-term S&T.

If confirmed, what metrics would you use to assess whether the Air Force is investing adequately in S&T programs and whether the Air Force has achieved the proper balance between near-term research and long-term S&T?

*Answer.* Robust S&T is foundational to military superiority, especially when considering peer competitor investment. Throughout my career I have pushed technology development and integration into operations, often exceeding the DSB’s recommendations. Defense S&T investments not only provide disruptive advantage for the warfighter, but they also drive innovation and economic growth. The Department of the Air Force must strike the appropriate balance between near-term readiness and the forward-looking long-term S&T to ensure Air Force and Space Force technical superiority. If confirmed, I will work to ensure an appropriate, balanced S&T investment portfolio.

#### TECHNICAL WORKFORCE

*Question.* A significant challenge facing the Air Force today is a shortage of highly skilled data scientists, computer programmers, cyber and other scientific, technical, and engineering talent to work at Defense laboratories and technical centers.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to increase the recruiting and retention of scientists, engineers, software coders, and in other technical positions across the Air Force’s research, development, and acquisition enterprise?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I’ll review the Air and Space Force initiatives to attract STEM talent to support research and development; the acquisition enterprises; and operations to ensure we retain our technological edge. I’ll focus on reducing hurdles to hiring and cultivate a 21st-century workforce using tools such as partnerships, outreach and scholarships.

*Question.* What is your view of the utility of various special civilian personnel authorities (e.g. Acq Demo, Lab Demo, Cyber Excepted Service, etc.), that were enacted to address the needs of the DOD technical workforce?

*Answer.* As I understand them, special hiring authorities, like AcqDemo, LabDemo, and Cyber Excepted Service are essential tools for the Department of Defense to compete for the best and brightest minds in science, technology, engineering, and acquisition. By adapting aspects of traditional personnel management, these authorities allow us to recruit and retain individuals with specialized skills critical to national security. If confirmed, I would further explore streamlining these opportunities.

#### AIR FORCE MILITARY END STRENGTH

*Question.* Is the Air Force’s current end strength sufficient to meet national defense objectives? If not, what end strength do you believe is necessary?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the Chief of Space Operations, the Director, Air National Guard, and the Chief of Air Force Reserve to review Air Force and Space Force end strength requirements to ensure an adequate balance between current operational requirements and any future force requirements. I will commit to ensuring the right end strength is achieved to properly sustain a force structure that meets all mission demands and continuing to work on modernizing our capabilities and our force.

*Question.* What additional force shaping authorities and tools does the Air Force need, in your view?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review existing force shaping authorities and tools to ensure the DAF is postured accurately to manage force strength. I commit to working with Congress to ensure the DAF remains agile and responsive regarding the size and skills needed.

#### SPACE FORCE MILITARY END STRENGTH

*Question.* The prior Secretary of the Air Force has stated that the end strength and budget of the Space Force is insufficient to meet current threats.

What are your views of the current Space Force end strength and budget?

*Answer.* The Space Force has made great progress in the 5-years since establishment. However, I believe that the increasing threats in, from, and to space capabilities require that we review the budget to ensure the Space Force has the funding needed to address space superiority and ensure they can control the domain. The threats in space require that we make strong investments in the near term to stay ahead of the threat, which may require a significant increase in funding and manning. Further, to achieve Peace through Strength, the Space Force needs to smartly grow to respond to the challenges of the space domain.

#### RECRUITING/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.

If confirmed, how would you ensure the Air Force maintains sufficiently high recruitment and retention standards?

*Answer.* I understand the Department continuously evaluates recruitment and retention programs to optimize policies and processes necessary to thrive in the fierce competition for talent. I understand the Department is seeing historically high recruiting and retention rates. I have significant experience in recruiting and maintaining a highly skilled workforce and if confirmed, I will review these standards to ensure we recruit and retain quality, highly skilled talent needed to fight and defend the Nation we serve.

*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.* It is most important for the Department of the Air Force to maintain its readiness while simultaneously building the force of the future each Service needs through data-informed recruiting and retention initiatives. If confirmed, I will assess our standards and policies ensuring they support the Department’s readiness and war-fighting needs.

*Question.* What impact do current medical and other qualifications for enlistment in the Air Force have on the number of individuals eligible for military service? If confirmed, what changes to such qualifications, if any, would you recommend increasing the number of individuals eligible for service without degrading the quality of recruits?

*Answer.* I currently have no reason or data to doubt the current standards and criteria. If confirmed, in my view, we must balance our standards to keep pace with medical science and modernization while meeting the need for a ready and capable force. To that end, I will keep the balance of those standards in the forefront and work with DOD to maximize our effectiveness and ensure force readiness.

*Question.* Rather than relying solely on ever-higher compensation for a shrinking pool of volunteers, what creative steps would you take, if confirmed, to expand the pool of eligible recruits and improve Air Force recruiting?

*Answer.* I understand the Air Force and Space Force are on track to meet FY25 requirements with record high recruiting. If confirmed, I will work with our services to evaluate our recruiting force, our marketing strategies, and our recruiting policies and programs to recruit the talent needed to meet our warfighter readiness.

*Question.* What do you consider to be key to the Air Force’s future success in retaining the best qualified personnel for continued service in positions of greater responsibility and leadership in the Air Force?

*Answer.* The key to developing and retaining our personnel lies in fielding a continuum of training, education, and experiential development that fosters Air Force

leaders. We need to focus both on quality of life and quality of service. If confirmed, I will collaborate with our force development and management experts as well as career field managers to align officer, enlisted, and civilian development with Air Force needs.

*Question.* What steps, if any, should be taken to ensure that current operational requirements and tempo do not adversely impact the overall recruiting, retention, readiness, and morale of soldiers?

*Answer.* If confirmed, it will be my responsibility to evaluate the current operational requirements, recruiting, retention, and readiness to ensure we are prioritizing strategic force management, investing in quality-of-life initiatives, fostering a warrior ethos, and leveraging technology and innovation. I will be tireless in my advocacy and support for Airmen and Guardians to ensure they have the resources, training, and support they need to be successful.

*Question.* In your view, do current recruiting standards—particularly DOD-wide criteria for tier-one recruits—accurately predict recruit attrition and/or future success in the Air Force?

*Answer.* To my understanding, DOD-wide tier-one recruiting standards provide a valuable baseline by focusing on factors like education, aptitude and physical fitness. Robust recruiting standards help Airmen/Guardians successfully transition into their first operational unit, but there are limitations on predicting accurate recruit attrition and/or future success in the Department of the Air Force. This is due to the evolving nature of warfare and wide variety of career paths in the Department. If confirmed, I will work to understand recruitment pools, prioritize meritocracy in evaluating recruits, and ensure the Air Force is refining recruitment metrics.

*Question.* Do you believe that current military entrance testing methods unnecessarily restrict the pool of eligible recruits, for example, by penalizing prospective recruits for whom English is not their native language?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the current efforts across the Department to ensure valid, reliable, and fair criteria and measures are used to access applicants with the highest potential.

#### PILOT RETENTION

*Question.* The Air Force has consistently reported a shortage of thousands of pilots including a shortage of at least 950 fighter pilots.

What are the Air Force's current efforts to address this critical problem? How would you assess the effectiveness of these efforts to date?

*Answer.* I am aware airline hiring is expected to grow by approximately 6 percent annually through 2031. This likely will challenge the Air Force's pilot ecosystem by recruiting its experienced pilots who are critical to providing experience in combat operations as well as producing and experiencing new pilots. I understand that thanks to Congress, the Air Force offers the most comprehensive pilot retention incentive in history. If confirmed, I will pay close attention to the results of retention incentives and continue to work with Congress to improve pilot production and retention.

*Question.* What monetary and non-monetary incentives and initiatives implemented by the Air Force have yielded the most positive impacts on pilot retention?

*Answer.* I understand the Department is committed to retaining experienced pilots by focusing on four key areas: compensation, talent management, quality of life, and quality of service. This includes utilizing targeted bonuses, prioritizing assignment stability and transparency, and ensuring a holistic approach that addresses all aspects of a pilot's experience. If confirmed, I will closely monitor these efforts and work with Air Force leaders to ensure their effectiveness in meeting the needs of our future force.

*Question.* What additional authorities does the Air Force need from Congress to address this shortfall definitively?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review whether and to what extent additional authorities may be required to address the pilot shortfall.

*Question.* How has the Air Force increased pilot production capacity commensurate with the demands of the NDS?

*Answer.* To my understanding, the Department recognizes the critical importance of addressing the pilot shortage to meet the demands of the National Defense Strategy with a highly trained and ready force. The Air Force has implemented numerous programs to increase pilot production capacity through a multi-pronged approach that encompasses recruitment, retention, modernization of training, and monetary incentives.

*Question.* As the Air Force prepares for competition with a peer-adversary, what steps is it taking to increase quality standards within and screening rates for flight school, and the pipeline beyond?

*Answer.* The Air Force's mission is airpower anywhere and anytime. It is critical the Department addresses the pilot shortage. If confirmed, I will tackle this challenge by consulting with internal and external experts to develop an approach that enhances pipeline strength, optimizes training efficiency, and prioritizes retention of our pilots.

#### RESERVE COMPONENTS

*Question.* In your view, what is the appropriate relationship between the active Air Force and the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard?

*Answer.* The appropriate relationship between the Active Air Force, the Air National Guard, and the Air Force Reserve is robust interoperability. Seamless integration across the components enhances overall mission capability and readiness of the Total Force. If confirmed, I will work across the components to evaluate and understand the current dynamics of this relationship, enabling me to identify the best approaches to leverage the unique structure and strengths of each component.

*Question.* What is your vision for the roles and missions of the Air Force Reserve Components? If confirmed, what new objectives would you seek to achieve with respect to the Air Force Reserve Components' organization, force structure, and end strength?

*Answer.* The Total Air Force team includes the Air Reserve Component imbued with decisive and precise deterrent capability unmatched in other nations. The appropriate roles and missions of the Air Reserve Component should be aligned with the strategic requirements of the Air Force and the National Defense Strategy. The Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve provide strategic depth and operational capacity across all mission sets, domains, and capabilities of the Total Force. If confirmed, my objectives would be to ensure an integrated, Total Force approach to organizing, training, and equipping Airmen to meet the National Defense Strategy.

*Question.* Are you concerned that continued reliance on Air Force Reserve Components to execute operational missions—both at home and around the globe—is adversely affecting the ability to meet their recruiting and retention missions? Why or why not?

*Answer.* I recognize sustained tempo can create challenges. If confirmed, I will consult with Guard and Reserve leaders to assess the impact and identify any steps needed to support the long-term health of the force.

#### MILITARY COMPENSATION

*Question.* What is your assessment of the adequacy of military compensation and benefits?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to a detailed review of military compensation to better understand which, if any areas may need revision to allow for a more targeted approach to the overall compensation package.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to control the rising cost of military personnel?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the current cost of DAF military personnel, what led to its growth, and areas in which we may be able to achieve cost savings while maintaining our ability to attract and retain talent.

#### MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM (MHS) REFORM

*Question.* Do you support the implementation of the MHS reforms mandated by the NDAA's for FYs 2017, 2019, and 2020?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will support the Defense Health Agency (DHA) based on the direction of Congress. DAF has been a steadfast, transparent partner to the DHA, providing leadership and project management experience to transfer programs and resources IAW with law to support DHA's mission. There have been many challenges based on the disparate organization of each of the Services and Service-specific needs, but I will ensure the DAF remains dedicated to supporting the DHA and MTFs that support Air Force and Space Force missions and healthcare delivery to our communities.

*Question.* Will you ensure that the Air Force continues to provide the military medical personnel needed to provide care in military treatment facilities?

*Answer.* I proactively support the Military Health System's (MHS) mission to ensure a medically ready force and a ready medical force—anytime, anywhere. We owe it to our Service members and their families to provide the finest care available both at home and on the battlefield, and our military medical personnel are at the center

of that capability. If confirmed, I will carefully review our military medical personnel strategic outlook to ensure we are recruiting, accessing, and retaining the right talent to best support the demands of our complex mission.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure that the Air Force reduces its medical headquarters' staffs and infrastructure to reflect the more limited roles and responsibilities of the Air Force Surgeon General?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with the Air Force Surgeon General to validate the size of the Surgeon General's headquarters staff and ensure effective execution of the roles and responsibilities within the office.

#### NON-DEPLOYABLE SERVICE MEMBERS

*Question.* Do you agree that airmen and guardians who are non-deployable for more than 12 consecutive months should be subject either to separation from the Air Force or referral into the Disability Evaluation System?

*Answer.* Readiness is vital to military service. If confirmed, I'll ensure that non-deployment policies align with Air Force priorities, putting readiness and mission needs first. Individual circumstances will be considered, but operational strength and deployability will take precedence. I'll work closely with leadership to ensure our forces remain strong, capable, and mission ready, while still allowing the DAF to take full advantage of human capital available.

*Question.* In your view, under what circumstances might the retention of a servicemember who has been non-deployable for more than 12 months be in the best interest of the Department of the Air Force?

*Answer.* I do not have enough information to speculate on the frequency of this occurrence. If confirmed, I will work with DAF leaders to understand the current approach and consider mission and readiness requirements of the Department of the Air Force.

*Question.* In your view, should an airman or guardian's readiness to perform the required specific missions, functions, and tasks in the context of a particular deployment also be considered in determining whether that service member is deployable?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with DAF leaders to understand the current approach, consider mission and readiness requirements of the services, and ensure those policies are applied consistently.

*Question.* What are your ideas for addressing the challenges of medical non-deployability in the Reserve components?

*Answer.* Ensuring medical readiness in the Air Force, to include the Reserve Component, is critical to maintaining overall force effectiveness. If confirmed, I will work to identify and address the root causes of non-deployability across the entire service to include the Active and Reserve Component.

#### MILITARY FAMILY READINESS AND SUPPORT

*Question.* What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues for service members and their families?

*Answer.* I believe we recruit Airmen or Guardians but retain families. Based on what I hear in the press and see with members of the NRO staff, I am concerned spousal employment and access to high-quality, affordable food may be some of the family readiness challenges today's force faces. If confirmed, I will engage with DAF leaders to identify the key family readiness challenges, assess the DAF's existing capabilities in addressing them, and develop strategies to enhance these programs while advocating for required resources.

*Question.* If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to ensure that military families are provided with accessible, high-quality childcare, at an appropriate cost?

*Answer.* Military readiness depends on providing military families access to affordable, high-quality, and readily available childcare. If confirmed, I will collaborate with DAF leaders to evaluate ongoing initiatives addressing this need. Additionally, I will explore opportunities to further expand the childcare network, including traditional, non-traditional and community-based solutions to meet the needs of our Airmen and Guardians.

#### SUICIDE PREVENTION

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions would you take to prevent suicides in the Department of the Air Force, and in the families of airmen and guardians across all components?

*Answer.* I believe the Air Force has a responsibility to promote mental well-being, eliminate barriers to mental health resources, and remove the stigma of seeking help. Doing so enhances our lethality, readiness and warrior ethos. If confirmed, I

will support continued implementation of the Brandon Act and the establishment of the Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce and will support evidence-based programs that improve the process for service members to access mental health support.

#### MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to airmen and guardians in an operational theater, as well as to they and their families at home station locations?

*Answer.* Military service provides unique challenges, and access to mental and behavioral resources is essential. If confirmed, I will work to understand the State of our mental and behavioral health resources—at home and in operational theaters—to provide Airmen and Guardians the care they need.

*Question.* If confirmed, what specifically would you do to ensure that sufficient mental and behavioral health resources are available to Reserve Component airmen, guardians, and their families who do not reside near a military installation?

*Answer.* Military service provides unique challenges, and access to mental and behavioral resources is essential. If confirmed, I will work to understand the State of the mental and behavioral health resources available to Reserve Component airmen and their families.

*Question.* Although the Department has made great strides in reducing the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors, many service members remain concerned that their military careers will be adversely affected should their chain of command become aware that they are seeking mental or behavioral health care. At the same time, the military chain of command has a legitimate need to be aware of physical and mental health conditions that may affect the readiness of the service members under their command.

Regarding the provision of mental and behavioral health care, how does the Air Force bridge the gap between an airman or guardian's desire for confidentiality and the chain of command's legitimate need to know about matters that may affect the readiness of the airman, guardian, and the unit?

*Answer.* Ensuring the readiness of our force depends on the mental health and well-being of our Airmen and Guardians. Balancing confidentiality with the need to address issues affecting readiness is a critical and complex challenge that I would take seriously. If confirmed, I would work with DAF leadership to identify best practices to ensure a fair balance between confidentiality and operational readiness. I would work to foster a culture where seeking help is viewed as a strength, not a career risk, while maintaining the readiness and lethality that the DAF's mission demands.

*Question.* In your view, do non-medical counseling services provided by DOD Military Family Life Counselors have a role in promoting the readiness of airmen, guardians, and their families? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* While I have not yet had the opportunity to review the DAF methods for deciding between the use of DOD Military Family Life Counselors and medical counseling services, I am passionate about military readiness. If confirmed, I will work closely with DAF leaders to analyze these processes, clarify the role of DOD Military Family Life Counselors, and explore ways to enhance their utilization in the future.

#### SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAMS

*Question.* Do you believe the policies, programs, resources, and training that DOD and the Military Services have put in place to prevent and respond to sexual assault, and to protect service members who report sexual assault from retaliation, are working? If not, what else must be done?

*Answer.* As a leader in DOD, I witnessed significant emphasis on ending sexual violence in our Services. Sexual assault and retaliation for reporting sexual assault harms our Airmen and Guardians and reduces our military readiness—therefore, it demands our attention. If confirmed, I will review current policies, programs, resources, and training related to sexual assault prevention and response for their effectiveness, to include the protection of service members who report sexual assault from retaliation.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would you do to increase focus on the prevention of sexual assaults?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would review current DAF programs designed to respond to and prevent sexual assaults. I also would work with DAF leaders to ensure the programs and initiatives we implement align with military readiness. Finally, I would receive a briefing on the current evaluation activities to assess progress.

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

*Answer.* In my view, restricted and unrestricted reporting options offer victims the option to maintain confidentiality, if desired, as well as providing an opportunity to file an official report. Using both options allows the Department to provide helping services in line with the victim's desires.

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE IN MILITARY FAMILIES

*Question.* What is your understanding of the extent of domestic violence and child abuse in the Air Force, and, if confirmed, what actions would you take to address these issues?

*Answer.* Any case of domestic violence or child abuse and neglect is against the values and threatens operational readiness in the Department of the Air Force. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring these issues are receiving the attention they deserve and that there are adequate resources to support the initiatives to prevent and respond to domestic violence and child abuse and neglect.

#### U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY

*Question.* In your view, what is the unique benefit of a military service academy compared to other officer commissioning sources?

*Answer.* I value all commissioning sources. Between USAFA, ROTC, and Officer Training School we are able to build the officer corps we need for the future. My understanding is a very high percentage of USAFA graduates commission into combat and combat support career fields, heavily weighted to our pilot and space operator pipelines. If confirmed, I will evaluate the commissioning opportunities.

*Question.* Do you believe the Air Force Academy currently is meeting the needs of the Air Force and Space Force in terms of producing new officers with necessary academic experience, military discipline, and character?

*Answer.* Yes. I support USAFA's priorities of forging warfighters to win, developing leaders of character and quality, and motivating critical thinkers to adapt. If confirmed, I will ensure USAFA provides academic rigor and that all our commissioning programs instill in cadets the warrior ethos required to lead our forces.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the efficacy of the policies and processes in place at the Air Force Academy to prevent sexual assault and sexual harassment, and to ensure that cadets who do report assault or harassment are not subject to retaliation—social ostracism and reputation damage—in particular?

*Answer.* I have not yet had a chance to review the specific policies and procedures in place at the Air Force Academy. If confirmed, I would ensure the Air Force Academy is in full compliance with DOD and DAF policy and initiatives on preventing and responding to sexual assault and harassment. If improvements are needed, I am committed to making required changes.

#### JOINT OFFICER MANAGEMENT

*Question.* In your view, do the requirements associated with becoming a Joint Qualified Officer (JQO), and the link between attaining joint qualification and eligibility for promotion to General Officer, continue to be consistent with the operational and professional demands of Air Force and Space Force line officers?

*Answer.* The DAF must operate in a joint environment to be effective, and I believe joint experience is important to success. Although I am not currently familiar with the specific requirements, if confirmed I will work with senior leaders, across the DAF, to examine the qualification and make any recommendations I find necessary to ensure the requirements are aligned with development requirements to support operational priorities.

*Question.* What additional modifications, if any, would you recommend to JQO prerequisites necessary to ensure that Air Force and Space Force officers are able to attain both meaningful joint and Service-specific leadership experience, as well as adequate professional development?

*Answer.* Leadership experience and professional development are crucial to ensure our officers are prepared for leadership in complex security environments. If confirmed, I will work with senior leaders, across the DAF, to examine JQO prerequisites and make any recommendations I find necessary to ensure the requirements are aligned with development requirements to support operational priorities.

## SPACE FORCE PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT ACT

*Question.* The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 authorized the Space Force to combine all active and Reserve component guardians into a single, full-time/part-time, component.

In your judgment, how will this novel military personnel arrangement benefit the Space Force?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about implementation of the Space Force Personnel Management Act. Thanks to the vision of Congress, PMA offers significant potential in enabling the Space Force to manage its unique military force more effectively to meet current and evolving mission requirements while delivering unmatched space capabilities.

*Question.* How will you ensure former members of the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard are not disadvantaged by joining the Space Force under this new construct?

*Answer.* As I understand it, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 authorized the creation of the Space Force Personnel Management Act (SFPMA) which approved the integration active-component Guardians and Air Force Reservists in space-focused career fields to offer both full-and part-time service options. If confirmed, I will review the existing progress toward implementation of SFPMA to ensure it properly meets the Total Force needs and will focus on how implementation plans provide a level playing field for current members of the Air Force Reserve who opt in to the Space Force. Additionally, it is my understanding that the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 directed the transfer of Covered Space Functions of the Air National Guard to the United States Space Force. If confirmed, I will review implementation of this requirement.

*Question.* The Committee understands that personnel information technology systems are the main obstacle preventing the Space Force from implementing the Space Force Personnel Management Act expeditiously.

If confirmed, how will you assist the Space Force acquire the necessary technology required to implement the Space Force Personnel Management Act?

*Answer.* The Space Force Personnel Management Act is an important step toward modernizing the Space Force and allowing additional flexibilities to support a more efficient and effective force development. If confirmed, I will ensure the Space Force is resourced and unhindered by bureaucratic roadblocks throughout the multi-year implementation process to deliver the technology required to meet congressional intent and take care of our Guardians.

*Question.* Section 514 of the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 requires the Secretary of the Air Force to transfer to the Space Force the covered space functions and personnel of the Air National Guard.

What is your understanding of when the transfer of the covered units and equipment to the Space Force will occur, and what is the associated plan for transferring personnel?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with my senior military officials in assessing resource levels to ensure the Space Force budget aligns with the priorities set forth in the National Defense Authorization Act, which will include evaluating the timeline for transferring covered units and equipment and developing a comprehensive plan for transferring associated personnel.

## AIR FORCE INTEGRATED PAY AND PERSONNEL SYSTEM (AFIPPS)

*Question.* The Committee is aware that the AFIPPS program continues to struggle with significant schedule delays and cost overruns. This program is essential for the Air Force to implement modern personnel policy and for Air Force audit requirements.

What is your view of the importance of AFIPPS?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the Air Force Integrated Personnel and Pay System (AFIPPS) is the DAF's modernized solution to link personnel and pay. If confirmed, I will seek a briefing on the program and, if necessary, will work with DAF leadership to build a strategy to finalize the program.

*Question.* If confirmed, what will you do to ensure AFIPPS delivers the promised capability according to latest schedule and cost estimates?

*Answer.* Caring for our personnel is a no fail mission. If confirmed, I am committed to working with DAF leadership to understand where we are with this program and what we need to do moving forward.

## PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

*Question.* What changes or reform would you recommend to the professional military education system to ensure that tomorrow's leaders have the tools necessary to ensure the Department is able to meet the national defense objectives of the future?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will conduct a comprehensive review of our Professional Military Education system, engaging with internal and external experts to ensure current delivery models align with mission readiness. This includes analyzing curriculum relevance, resource allocation, integration of emerging technologies, and strategic competition preparedness, to ensure the successful execution of mission by the Department.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

*Question.* How would you describe the current State of the Department of the Air Force (including the Space Force) civilian workforce, including its morale and the Department's ability to successfully recruit and retain top civilian talent?

*Answer.* I believe civilian employees are vital to sustaining the readiness of our military forces. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department is focused on hiring top talent into positions that directly contribute to our warfighting readiness. I also will review the work environment and level of employee engagement. If confirmed, I will work with DAF leadership to maintain or enhance work environments and employee engagement.

*Question.* In your judgment, what is the biggest challenge facing the Air Force and Space Force in effectively and efficiently managing their civilian workforce?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would work with DAF leadership to understand the challenges DAF faces in managing the workforce. In addition, if confirmed, I would maximize the numerous hiring and compensation flexibilities and authorities the Congress has provided and seek out ways to bring dramatic, long-lasting improvements through a meritocratic culture that promotes innovation and excellence. I will review our personnel processes and systems and look for efficiencies that will enable effective management of the civilian workforce.

*Question.* In your view, do Air Force and Space Force supervisors have adequate authorities to address and remediate employee misconduct and poor duty performance, and ultimately to divest of a civilian employee who fails to meet requisite standards of conduct and performance? If so, are both civilian and military supervisors adequately trained to exercise such authorities? If not, what additional authorities or training do Air Force and Space Force supervisors require?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I am committed to making sure the Department continues to have the best people. Throughout my career, I have focused on getting the right people into the right jobs and in structuring organizations to use their people effectively. If I am confirmed, I will review the effectiveness of the numerous personnel management authorities and systems and explore greater efficiencies. The Department must make every effort to create a future-ready, agile and adaptive workforce able to meet the rapidly evolving challenges of the 21st century.

## Congressional Oversight

*Question.* In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee and other appropriate committees of Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, reports, records (including documents and electronic communications) and other information from the Department.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

*Answer.* Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records (including documents and electronic communications), and other information as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

*Answer.* Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to consult with this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this committee? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, Federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

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[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

##### RE-CAPITALIZATION

1. Senator COTTON. Dr. Meink, what are the steps you will be taking to ensure that we have the munitions and combat airframes necessary to counter China?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will assess the Air Force's requirements of both munitions and combat air platforms. I also commit to working with Geographic Component Commands to address weapon requirements. I plan to continue requesting appropriations for as many relevant munitions as the industrial base can produce, as well as investing in the development of new ones. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to obtain appropriations for the procurement of munitions and their delivery platforms to maintain a competitive edge in a highly contested environment.

##### SPACE FORCE

2. Senator COTTON. Dr. Meink, long range kill chain will rely on space access. How will you ensure the Joint Force will have durable access to the space domain?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will ensure the United States Space Force (USSF) has the resources it needs to protect and enable the Joint Force: The USSF continues to provide U.S. forces the freedom of maneuver to achieve national strategic objectives and disrupt adversary long range kill chains. Achieving this requires an end State where adversaries are deterred from using space to counter Joint Force activities. To ensure any adversary is deterred we must achieve Space Superiority. A principal means to provide Space Superiority is assured access to space via space lift and a resilient, hybrid architecture. The USSF drives capability and resilience for lift through multiple launch sites, supply chains, vehicles, and companies. The USSF stays ready to launch payloads when needed through considerations that include but are not limited to agile spacecraft integration and ready launch vehicles and facilities.

The USSF faces a challenge in pursuit of Space Superiority, in providing capabilities in the space domain, that is similar to every other Armed Service—to balance readiness in the near term with long term modernization of our forces. If confirmed, my responsibility will be to provide direction and secure resources which establish deterrence today while preparing a combat credible force to act as needed in the domain in the future.

## NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE AND SPACE FORCE

3. Senator COTTON. Dr. Meink, the roles of the National Reconnaissance Office and the U.S. Space Force are closely aligned and sometimes overlap. How do we best leverage the National Reconnaissance Office and the U.S. Space Force so that they complement each other?

Dr. MEINK. As the NRO's Principal Deputy Director, I provided day-to-day management of the NRO, including the integration of intelligence capabilities to meet mission priorities. If confirmed, I would review the space acquisition structure, to include test and evaluation processes, with an eye toward streamlining decision-making and eliminating bureaucracy, to ensure that doctrine, strategy, and operations are all properly aligned to fully exploit the combined commercial and exquisite national capabilities of the U.S. Further, I would prioritize a review of integration and a secure supply chain across the national security space enterprise, to include the Intelligence Community, using congressionally established bodies, to understand where greater integration and efficiency may be achieved to effectively support combatant commands.

## INTELLIGENCE

4. Senator COTTON. Dr. Meink, a large majority of the Air Force's processing, exploitation, and dissemination capacity, over 10,000 airmen, is funded and tied to the U-2, MQ-9, and RQ-4 through the Air Force Distributed Common Ground System. As the Air Force and Space Force strategy divests away from air-breathing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) platforms, and toward space-based collectors, how will you ensure that the intelligence airmen providing critical intelligence capacity and weapons quality data remain manned and funded to enable combat readiness?

Dr. MEINK. As I understand, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) is divesting some of its intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) fleets to transition to more advanced and survivable capabilities with sensors in all domains. The DAF is not pivoting completely to space. When combined, air and space-based capabilities provide a flexible and complimentary force to prevail in any conflict. If confirmed, I look forward to better assessing the capabilities, including intelligence manpower, needed in the air and space domains.

5. Senator COTTON. Dr. Meink, how will you ensure that the airmen and guardians can access and utilize the classified data collected by space-based sensors, which are traditionally controlled by the National Security Agency (NSA) and National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), to support their theater component commanders?

Dr. MEINK. The Air Force and Space Force effectively collaborate with both NGA and NSA. When it comes to ensuring access to SB-MTI data, the Space Force and NGA are developing a joint security classification guide that is aggressively pursuing the lowest classification level for the data that is safe for national security while meeting warfighting needs. On a broader scale, we continue to strengthen our crucial partnerships with NGA and NSA, emphasizing timely and secure access to relevant and accurate data. Clear policies streamlined vetting of data, and system interoperability are critical to enabling Guardians and Airmen to support combatant commanders with space-based insights. Furthermore, by streamlining security clearance eligibility and ensuring timely sponsorship based on validated mission needs, we will leverage established frameworks to provide authorized personnel with the classified information required for operational success, ultimately balancing robust security with the imperative of delivering actionable data to the warfighter on tactically relevant timelines.

6. Senator COTTON. Dr. Meink, as the Department of the Air Force divests many airborne ISR platforms and re-prioritize toward space-based capabilities, how are you going to ensure that theater Air Force intelligence collection priorities will be prioritized appropriately within a collection process controlled by national Intelligence Community (IC) agencies like NSA, NGA, and National Reconnaissance Office (NRO)?

Dr. MEINK. Air Component intelligence collection priorities will continue to follow the same process used today. Theater air components will prioritize their intelligence collection and submit their prioritized list to the Combatant Command for integration into the Combatant Command's collection priorities. Once a Combatant Command finalizes their prioritized list, DOD and IC systems will collect against Combatant Command priorities in accordance with established agreements and Combatant Command allocation.

## U.S. NUCLEAR DETERRENT

7. Senator COTTON. Dr. Meink, on February 25, 2025, Chairman Wicker and I wrote a classified letter to Secretary Hegseth and Secretary Wright. Will you commit to reviewing this letter and the attached documents?

Dr. MEINK. Thank you for bringing this to my attention. If confirmed, I will request a copy of your letter and its attachments and review them.

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 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR M. MICHAEL ROUNDS

## SOFTWARE ACQUISITION PATHWAY

8. Senator ROUNDS. Dr. Meink, as you know, the Software Acquisition Pathway (SWP) was established in December 2019 following the enactment of the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA. However, over 6 years later, DOD is still not taking full advantage of this authority. Earlier this month Secretary Hegseth issued the memo “Directing Modern Software Acquisition to Maximize Lethality” to direct all DOD components to use the SWP as the “preferred pathway for all software development” to include weapon systems programs. This is a positive development. As the memo notes, “DOD has struggled to reframe its acquisition process from a hardware-centric approach to a software-centric approach” and as a result, “it is the warfighter who pays the price.” If confirmed, what specific actions would you seek to undertake in your organization to accelerate software acquisition, especially within collaborative and modular autonomous weapons systems, and fully take advantage of the more nimble and rapid development that occurs in the commercial software sector?

Dr. MEINK. In my understanding, the DAF has been actively and continuously applying the software pathway since its introduction to improve the delivery of software capabilities to the warfighter. The criticality of modern systems software necessitates leveraging all authorities, including Commercial Solutions Openings and Other Transactions, to accelerate system delivery and address evolving threats. If confirmed, I will review the DAF’s application of this pathway, improve training on modern software development—emphasizing flexible scope and frequent releases, and ensure access to effective cost-estimating and management tools compatible with these processes.

## SPECTRUM

9. Senator ROUNDS. Dr. Meink, as I have shared before, I have heard from 24 senior DOD officials in hearings over the past 2 years—including the Secretary of Defense, every service chief, and 8 combatant commanders—that forcing DOD to vacate the 3.1–3.45 GHz band would have extremely negative and costly effects on our warfighting capabilities. If confirmed, what will you do to make sure that the Air Force and Department of Defense can maintain access to use of and maneuver within the electromagnetic spectrum at home and abroad?

Dr. MEINK. The 3.1–3.45 GHz band is essential for joint operations. This range impacts air- and land-based radars, weapons systems and other electronics—such as the station keeping equipment on Air Force C–130 aircraft. Physics in this band cannot be replicated—ceding 3.1–3.45 GHz will negatively affect national security. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the DAF does not lose primacy for the operations and training we need in the Lower 3 GHz range, and I will continue working with the DOD CIO on how we might dynamically share the spectrum.

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 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

## ALASKA SPECIFIC ISSUES

10. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, Eielson Air Force Base (AFB) which in addition to being home to F–35 squadrons, F–16 interceptors, and KC–135s along with hosting many nations each year for Red Flag events, still needs many more “warm” facilities to house KC–135 airframes. It can only really fit two right now. Additionally, other infrastructure is very outdated, and facilities are not keeping pace with Wainwright Army base. Will you work with me to acquire the infrastructure necessary to hold the tankers?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will ensure infrastructure requirements at Eielson AFB are properly assessed and prioritized to support the critical missions being conducted from the installation.

11. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, in our discussion in my office we spoke about the need for additional hangar and infrastructure capability at Deadhorse (near Prudhoe Bay) to help extend the Air Force's reach in the Arctic. The U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) Commander, General Gregory Guillot, as well as the U.S. Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) Commander, General Kevin Schneider have both expressed interest in this location. Will you work with me, if confirmed, to get the military construction approved to support operations out of Deadhorse?

Dr. MEINK. The Arctic is critical to our ability to defend the homeland and project power internationally. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to evaluate our posture in Alaska, and I will work with Congress to ensure the Department has sufficient infrastructure to support its missions and operations.

12. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, the 18th Fighter Interceptor Squadron (FIS) at Eielson AFB is responsible for interception of Russian and Chinese strategic bombers and fighters that cross into the Alaskan Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). Oftentimes however the 18th FIS is short of either pilots or mechanics to accomplish their mission. They always do accomplish the mission, but often at great extra cost in manpower and time (especially as intercepts have increased in the last year). Will you commit to looking at the task organization and real-life manning of this unit and its sustainers and ensure that they are manned 100 percent to finish their mission?

Yes, if confirmed, I will commit to reviewing the task organization and manning of the 18th Fighter Interceptor Squadron and its supporting units to ensure they are resourced to effectively carry out their critical homeland defense mission.

13. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, as you are aware I've been fighting to get the KC-135 Active Association complete at Eielson AFB for nearly a decade and your predecessor signed off on it. I appreciate your commitment during your hearing to see this through to completion. I've ran into a number of issues with the Air Force Site Activation Task Force (SATF) which has visited Eielson nearly six times to conduct housing surveys. It appears they are using housing data from 2023 to make decisions regarding the amount of available housing at Eielson. Will you commit to work with me to ensure that SATF is using the most current housing data to inform its decisions about housing at Eielson and to relook the Air Force's housing requirements as soon as possible to ensure we are meeting mission need at the base?

Yes if, confirmed, I will review the housing data being used by the DAF to inform housing requirements and ensure we are using the most current data.

14. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, as part of President Trump's Golden Dome program, there will almost certainly be a need to ensure that our advanced early warning radar systems like the E-7 are capable of detecting incoming aircraft and missile threats both at home and if necessary, forward deployed. We have had a number of issues in Alaska with E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) readiness rates due to aging airframes and parts. Will you commit to reviewing the E-7 program to make sure we are properly resourcing it and work with me to ensure that we have that capability on hand when required in Alaska?

Dr. MEINK. I understand that Golden Dome will require the DAF to integrate command and control (C2) processes within the Joint Force, NORTHCOM, STRATCOM, and the inter-agency to fully address the threat from ballistic, hypersonic, advanced cruise missiles, and other next-generation aerial attacks. Airborne Early Warning and Control capabilities, like the future E-7A Wedgetail provide agile and responsive battlespace C2 and aircraft identification and tracking capabilities. If confirmed, I will review the E-7A program to ensure the ability to meet the current threats abroad and related to defending the homeland. I also commit to delivering the E-7A capability to the warfighter as quickly and affordably as possible, with support from Congress.

#### AERIAL REFUELING

15. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, for over 6 years now we've seen the new KC-46 aerial refueling tanker being delayed for various issues with its manufacturer Boeing. These issues have ranged from cracks in critical components to issues with the boom and drag on the aircraft. What is your plan to work with Boeing to get this aircraft fully operational and to improve its dismal readiness ratings?

I understand that the KC-46 is progressing toward full operational capability and that the recent strategic pause in deliveries is allowing for thorough inspection and repair of the identified cracks. If confirmed, I commit to work closely with Boeing to resolve remaining issues and deliver a fully operational and ready aircraft.

16. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, as the Air Force has waited for the KC-46 to overcome readiness issues, we are continuing to utilize the KC-135 (a decades-old aircraft) to conduct refueling operations. As a result, our tanker availability gap has grown since the aged aircraft has more and more maintenance issues. As you await new KC-46 deliveries and satisfactory testing, what will be your plan to increase KC-135 readiness above its current dismal level?

I have seen reports that the KC-135 fleet maintains an aircraft availability rate around 60 percent. If confirmed, I commit to reinvest in our military ensuring our warfighters have the funding and parts needed to boost operational readiness for our platforms and deliver meaningful technology.

17. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, can you talk through how you might “surge” maintenance in the event of a conflict?

The ability to “surge” tomorrow begins today. Three levers affect tanker readiness: parts, production, and people. The KC-46 and KC-135 require a focused investment in critical spare parts and components. I plan to work with the industrial base to improve contract reliability during a surge to improve parts delivery to depots and operational bases. The Total Force tanker fleet also requires a timely and predictable depot maintenance schedule that scales to the customer demand signal, composed of highly trained and professional civilian and contract personnel. Finally, we need high-quality maintainers at all our tanker bases manned at or above current levels to ensure enduring aircraft availability. Our Airmen are masters at “surging” for conflict, and it will be my job to set them up for success. If confirmed, I plan to influence all these levers and bring the necessary tanker readiness required by our combatant commanders.

18. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, what role do you think unmanned aerial refueling (like the Navy’s MQ-25 Stingray) will play in the future of air combat?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed I look forward to reviewing the analysis that examines concepts for unmanned aerial refueling and working with OSD and the other Services to leverage existing technologies.

#### F-47 FIGHTER PROGRAM

19. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, as you are aware the F-47 program was awarded recently to Boeing. While I have no doubt that Boeing was chosen because it had the best aircraft prototype, I’d like to know how you plan to hold contractors (including Boeing) accountable for any failures or delays in this program given its recent history with the KC-46 which is ongoing?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to work closely with our defense industrial base to deliver results while holding each other accountable as the Department cannot do this on its own. There must be proper alignment of contract types and incentives to the technical risk and fielding requirements of our warfighters. We must require open architecture compliance and drive continuous competition.

20. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, what do you think we learned from these previous programs that we should do differently with the F-47?

Dr. MEINK. I understand that the F-47 is built on a digital foundation that gives the government full visibility and control, ensuring knowledge parity with industry partners. This open architecture allows seamless integration of new technologies, guaranteeing it can continuously meet evolving threats and enable competition at the system level. If confirmed, I commit to looking at other programs to which we could apply these acquisition principles.

#### SMALL BUSINESS ACT 8(A) CONTRACTOR

21. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, in our meeting, you mentioned the need to thoroughly review our existing contracts and contract vehicles to ensure they are providing the best benefit to the taxpayer. The Small Business Act (SBA) 8(a) program, created by Congress, provides a contract vehicle through which sole source and set aside contracts can be awarded to small businesses owned by Alaska Native corporations, Community Development Corporations, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations. These corporations are tied to political relationships, not racial classifications. They also are some of our most efficient contractors, earning stellar Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) marks. Last many of these small businesses employ veterans at rates far exceeding the national average, allowing our Nation’s finest to continue to serve after they take off the uniform. Will you commit to me to work to preserve and strengthen 8(a) contracting for the Department of the Defense and the Air Force?

Dr. MEINK. I understand that the Section 8(a) program has provided notable benefits both to program participants and to Federal agencies. I also understand that the SBA has pursued program improvements to ensure that program participation and use decisions are made on sound criteria. The 8(a) Program and other Small Business programs are valuable tools for strengthening the defense industrial base. If confirmed, I will work with Congress, the Department of the Air Force Office of Small Business Programs (SAF/SB), and interagency partners such as SBA on improving, preserving, and strengthening Section 8(a) contracting and other Small Business Programs whenever using them would be in the best interest of the Department of the Air Force.

22. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, I recently toured an SBA 8(a) contracting operation and saw firsthand the value 8(a) brings to the Federal customer in terms of cost and efficiency while delivering mission-critical solutions that increase our national security and warfighter readiness. When the rate for big government contractors is double 8(a) shops and about 45 days for 8(a) contractors versus 3 months for big government contractors, and 8(a) shops give the intellectual property (IP) to the Government unlike big government contractors—would you agree that the SBA 8(a) program one of the most efficient and effective ways to deliver results to the Federal Government?

Dr. MEINK. I understand that the Section 8(a) program has provided notable benefits both to program participants and to Federal agencies. The 8(a) Program and other Small Business programs are valuable tools for strengthening the defense industrial base. If confirmed, I will work with Congress, the Department of the Air Force Office of Small Business Programs (SAF/SB), and interagency partners such as SBA on improving, preserving, and strengthening Section 8(a) contracting and other Small Business Programs whenever using them would be in the best interest of the Department of the Air Force.

#### ALASKA ENERGY ISSUES

23. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, President Trump's January 20, 2025 order declaring a National Energy Emergency which directs in section 2 to utilize the authorities afforded under the Defense Production Act "to facilitate the identification, leasing, siting, production, transportation, refining, and generation of domestic energy resources, including, but not limited to, on Federal lands." and in section 7 states "(a) In collaboration with the Secretaries of Interior and Energy, the Secretary of Defense shall conduct an assessment of the Department of Defense's ability to acquire and transport the energy, electricity, or fuels needed to protect the homeland and to conduct operations abroad, and, within 60 days, shall submit this assessment to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. This assessment shall identify specific vulnerabilities, including, but not limited to, potentially insufficient transportation and refining infrastructure across the Nation, with a focus on such vulnerabilities within the Northeast and West Coast regions of the United States. The assessment shall also identify and recommend the requisite authorities and resources to remedy such vulnerabilities, consistent with applicable law."

In Alaska, shortages in natural gas supplies in the Cook Inlet are affecting heating and energy usage in Southcentral Alaska—the most populated area in Alaska and home to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) which hosts the 673d Air Base Wing, the headquarters for the U.S. Alaskan Command, 11th Air Force, 11th Airborne Division, and the Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Command Region.

In late January 2024, temperatures dropped to record low temperatures (around -20° F) in the Anchorage area coinciding with failures of two of five of the wells at the Cook Inlet Natural Gas Storage (CINGSA) Facility reducing gas deliverability to local utilities and led to directing local users, including Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), to lower thermostats to conserve gas consumption. The Alaska LNG project is designed to provide these bases with gas and is in the process of providing it for utilities in Fairbanks and Southcentral Alaska.

Do you see the national security interest in seeing that natural gas from the Alaska LNG project is made available to Alaska's military bases and recognize the Alaska LNG project as being of strategic national importance for our military?

Dr. MEINK. Expanding our access to available, but underutilized, sources of energy, such as natural gas is important to power our installations and achieve national energy dominance. If confirmed, I will work with OSD, the Department of Energy, the Department of Interior, and other stakeholders, such as our utility part-

ners, to identify potential solutions to ensure our installations have the power they need to meet critical mission requirements.

24. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, will you commit to pursuing agreements, pursuant to the President’s Executive Order, to power Alaska’s military bases?

Dr. MEINK. Energy and water are critical to the Department of the Air Force’s ability to achieve its mission. If confirmed, I will commit to utilizing all available authorities to pursue an “all-of-the-above” approach to provide reliable energy for our installations in Alaska, in accordance with the President’s Executive Orders.

#### DEFENSE ACQUISITION AND PROCUREMENT

25. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, in a recent Readiness Subcommittee Hearing on Joint Force Posture, I asked each of the services’ vice chiefs about budget flexibility and carryover funding authority to provide each service with the ability to shift a certain percentage of funds among capabilities each year. Do you think that the services would benefit from such budget flexibility and how do you think it should best be implemented?

Dr. MEINK. I believe the DAF would benefit greatly from budget flexibility—it is imperative that we can move faster while developing and procuring capabilities to respond to emerging threats and changing technologies. I concur with the PPBE Commission Report’s recommendation to allow a carryover of 5 percent of Military Personnel and Operation and Maintenance annual total obligation authority into the next fiscal year. This authority would enable DOD managers to reserve a small portion of funds to address late-breaking bills and unanticipated expenses. To my knowledge, the current reprogramming limitations hinder the DOD’s ability to adopt emerging technologies. Increased flexibility is crucial and can be achieved by continuing to evaluate Below Threshold Reprogramming (BTR) threshold for adjustments. I believe a periodic review (e.g., annual or bi-annual) for reprogramming thresholds will ensure they remain relevant and address inflationary pressures.

26. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, as you probably know, software-defined and autonomous systems are vital to U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander, Admiral Samuel Paparo’s hellscape concept of operations (CONOP). And while not a panacea for a potential conflict with China, Admiral Paparo recently stated, “Unmanned systems [are] our force multiplier” and they “multiply [our] combat power, without multiplying our manning requirements.” Specifically, he emphasized that “we have to build these capabilities at scale . . .” During his nomination hearing, newly confirmed Deputy Secretary of Defense Stephen Feinberg agreed stating, “Clearly, we need to develop autonomy. Autonomy in significant numbers with a centralized command . . . Additionally, while we continue to heavily invest in new autonomous capabilities, we also have hundreds—if not thousands—of legacy systems, some in service and others in the boneyard, that could be upgraded with 21st Century software.”

In your personal opinions, in order to fully “scale” autonomous and software-defined capabilities “in significant numbers” to the warfighter, what approach should DOD take in retrofitting—or “jailbreaking”—legacy systems (that already exist in large numbers) with cutting-edge autonomous software capabilities?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will make scaling autonomous capability across DAF platforms an important priority. I will assess where DAF operational capabilities can benefit from advanced technologies and then ensure the best engineering and modernization approach is applied. I will also reinforce enterprise-wide approaches including open system architectures, modern software acquisition approaches, and DevSecOps software pipelines to allow delivery of systems at speed and scale to the warfighter.

27. Senator SULLIVAN. Dr. Meink, given the existing contractual limitations, what authorities or contractual changes would your teams need to execute these retrofits and unlock the latent capabilities already resident, but sadly dormant in our existing warfighting hardware?

Dr. MEINK. In my view, the Department should leverage authorities like OTAs and streamlined acquisition processes to rapidly prototype and accelerate deployment of these capabilities. If confirmed, I will review potential contract approaches such as associate contractor agreements, consortia, or other contractor teaming arrangements to unlock the potential of our fielded fleet.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KEVIN CRAMER

## COLLABORATIVE COMBAT AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION

28. Senator CRAMER. Dr. Meink, the Air Force needs a capability in mass to compete with the exponential growth of China's military, particularly in the air domain, and this must be achieved at a speed and cost not readily available with exquisite, manned aircraft. The Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) program promises to rapidly and affordably deliver highly capable, autonomous air vehicles at the scale necessary to deter our adversaries. In today's threat environment, we can no longer afford to prototype and iterate on emerging capabilities, like CCA, and stop short of fielding them in the nearer term. Instead, the service must have in place the acquisition strategy and funding needed to advance proven capabilities to the warfighter. Following a successful flight demonstration, we understand that the Air Force is planning to immediately transition Increment 1 to production to attain affordable mass at scale to counter the threat that exists today. As Secretary of the Air Force, will you commit to advancing Increment 1 of the CCA program into production and fielding at the scale required to compete with great power competitors?

Dr. MEINK. I share your concerns about our adversaries' efforts to challenge our air power strength. I understand that the DAF has plans for fielding an operational CCA capability before the end of the decade, and if confirmed, I'll work to deliver on CCA's promise of an affordable, semi-autonomous, rapidly fielded platform at scale.

Beyond rapid fielding, the DAF must integrate these new semi-autonomous systems, as a lethal force multiplier, into the existing force. This requires deliberate effort, as the DAF cannot afford to apply traditional operational and maintenance models on these systems. If confirmed, I commit to including operational and maintenance considerations in the program plan.

## COLLABORATIVE COMBAT AIRCRAFT ACCELERATION

29. Senator CRAMER. Dr. Meink, in consideration of the global threat environment, in particular China's military investment and the implications of great power conflict in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's (INDOPACOM) area of responsibility to U.S. Forces, the application of affordable and lethal mass matters. There is little doubt that the Air Force will need its exquisite, manned capabilities in particular use cases, but there are limits on quantities that can be produced, operated and sustained within the constraints of time and resources. However, we have seen how lower cost, highly capable autonomous aircraft can augment manned fighters and enhance the Air Force's ability to project power. One signature example of this is the Combat Collaborative Aircraft program. The Air Force has established a baseline procurement assumption of 1,000 Collaborative Combat Aircraft at an estimated unit cost of one-third the price of crewed fighters. With this example in mind, can you describe what the Air Force sees in the value of attritable systems and how the service intends to increase production and accelerate fielding of systems at scale?

Dr. MEINK. The DAF should continue to pursue a mix of systems which provide operational Commanders flexible options to achieve their objectives. For example, while crewed 5th Generation fighters continue to play a critical role, they may not be able to be produced on a timeline or at a cost which addresses the evolving threats posed by our adversaries. I understand that CCA will provide a force multiplier to the crewed fighter fleet and will deliver affordable mass by being less exquisite and complex but still operationally relevant. This will enable shorter manufacturing lead-times, faster production rates, and expedited fielding timelines.

## AUTONOMY SOFTWARE

30. Senator CRAMER. Dr. Meink, Congress recognizes the value of unmanned systems, and we're pleased to see the Air Force and the Secretary nominee's focus on these capabilities as well. While we strongly support the Air Force focus on building the hardware, we recognize that without a pilot in the cockpit, these aircraft will also need the advanced autonomy software required to operate. Leading autonomy providers in the commercial world, such as OpenAI and Tesla, spend billions of dollars on perception and training of their autonomy. Meanwhile, the Air Force has budgeted just fractions of this sum for the development of software for unmanned systems. What is the Air Force's future plans to develop, integrate, and field autonomy software?

Dr. MEINK. We must invest in cutting-edge technologies needed to counter the pacing challenge and maintain our edge. I believe autonomous and semi-autonomous weapon systems are required for the DAF to deter and, if necessary, win in

the future fight. If confirmed, I will review the current status and plans for the autonomous software that supports these critical capabilities.

I believe, the Air Force recognizes the growing importance and role of autonomy in unmanned systems and autonomous support systems, such as analysis and decision-making tools for core functions. The Air Force continues to make progress and has formed partnerships in academia and industry, but infrastructure, development, and support for autonomy software must be accelerated. If confirmed, I will take steps to create a unifying strategy to accelerate the development, integration, and fielding of autonomous software across our future systems. This includes aircraft, munitions, and decision-making tools and required infrastructure, data, and policy to rapidly field, iterate, and improve systems.

31. Senator CRAMER. Dr. Meink, is the Air Force sufficiently budgeting for the development, fielding, operations, and sustainment of this critical capability in the upcoming budget request and across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP)?

Dr. MEINK. The field of autonomous software is evolving incredibly fast. Budgeting must not only cover current needs but also anticipate the resources required to integrate emerging technologies like advanced AI, machine learning, and sophisticated sensor fusion. If confirmed, I will assess our planned investments against our requirements to ensure we not only keep pace with, but stay ahead of, potential adversaries.

#### EXPANDING USE OF AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS

32. Senator CRAMER. Dr. Meink, Congress recognizes the value of leveraging unmanned assets partnered with exquisite manned aircraft for a variety of mission sets across the Air Force. Could you share your thoughts regarding the myriad of mission sets that could be levied onto unmanned systems, including integration of unmanned systems into operations with existing and future manned platforms?

Dr. MEINK. The Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) program is part of the Next Generation Air Dominance Family of Systems, a DAF effort to equip the force with crewed and uncrewed platforms that can meet the pacing challenge. I look forward to working with USAF leaders to understand the missions they envision CCAs performing. My understanding is, under the umbrella of Autonomous Collaborative Platforms, future missions could include Reconnaissance, Mobility, Sensing, Communications, Electronic Attack or Refueling. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing development of the ACP capabilities.

33. Senator CRAMER. Dr. Meink, how are you planning to further leverage unmanned assets, including by transitioning certain mission sets to unmanned platforms?

Dr. MEINK. We are increasing automation and efficiency inherent to existing unmanned platforms to improve the lethality of our Airmen flying and operating those assets. I believe there are few rated and enlisted aviators better suited to developing tactics, techniques, and procedures for employing manned-unmanned teaming than are found flying the MQ-9, RQ-4, and RQ-170's in our inventory today.

34. Senator CRAMER. Dr. Meink, in particular, as adversaries have pushed their reach out further, our mobility and refueling fleets are further challenged. While the Air Force is the cornerstone of the Department of Defense's (DOD) tanker capabilities, we are failing to maintain the readiness of the minimum quantity of aircraft. We are encouraged by the Air Force's Next Generation Aerial Refueling System (NGAS) effort, which has the opportunity when fully funded to bring the quantities of aircraft to the right levels while also keeping them uncrewed to lower risk. Do you remain committed to the success of this program?

Dr. MEINK. It is clear to me the DAF must have a more resilient tanking capability and, if confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to increase the resilience of our tanker fleet through the most rapid and cost-effective means.

35. Senator CRAMER. Dr. Meink, could you expand on other Air Force mission sets in particular that could be successfully achieved through unmanned systems?

Dr. MEINK. I believe unmanned aircraft have the potential to contribute to the majority of DAF mission sets. To my knowledge, we are already employing unmanned systems in lethal environments to mitigate risk to individual Airmen against violent adversaries like the Houthis in Yemen. We continue to develop and deliver lethal effects through MQ-9s, specifically, asymmetrically advantaging our ability to persist in elevated threat environments.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

## SPACE FORCE

36. Senator BUDD. Dr. Meink, the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) has opted not to utilize Space Force's Strategic Launch Integration Contract (SLIC), effectively limiting competition and reinforcing the dominance of a few providers in the National Security Space Launch (NSSL) market. Given the Space Force's role in fostering a robust and competitive industrial base, how will you ensure that future Space Force launch contract vehicles actively promote competition and avoid the consolidation we have seen in recent NRO procurements?

Dr. MEINK. I support increasing competition in the launch of National Security payloads. It is important to maintain a robust and competitive launch market that can support enterprise requirements and maintain assured access to space while promoting healthy competition between commercial launch providers. As I understand, the DOD's National Security Space Launch Phase 3 acquisition strategy promotes competition and enhances resilience by providing opportunities for emerging launch providers to compete for more risk tolerant, commercial-like missions, while also ensuring assured access to space for critical, no-fail missions. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department works with the Space Force and industry to maintain diverse space access capabilities.

## HYPERSONICS

37. Senator BUDD. Dr. Meink, how concerned are you regarding China's hypersonic capabilities and, if confirmed, what should the organizations you have been nominated to lead, do to ensure sufficient emphasis is placed on and the proper resources are put toward the development of critical systems and supporting technologies that would help lower the costs and accelerate the fielding of the Department's offensive and defensive hypersonic programs of record, including those that would support Golden Dome?

Dr. MEINK. China's hypersonic weapons pose a significant challenge, and peace through strength requires a robust response. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring the Department of the Air Force emphasizes the accelerated fielding of resilient capabilities to ensure seamless warning, tracking, custody, and defense against these advanced threats in support of the Administration's Golden Dome initiative. I would also lead the DAF in partnering with Missile Defense Agency, National Reconnaissance Office, and other agencies to align resources to these critical hypersonic defense and space-based hypersonic tracking programs, to lower costs and meet aggressive fielding schedules. I believe the DAF should continue to leverage innovative acquisition strategies and existing authorities to accelerate the rapid prototyping and fielding of "best of breed" technology.

38. Senator BUDD. Dr. Meink, if confirmed, are you committed to working with this committee to ramp up the Department's efforts in critical hypersonic systems and supporting technologies to compete with China?

Dr. MEINK. Yes. The Air Force is focused on deterring China in the Indo-Pacific and, should deterrence fail, providing our Nation's leadership with the options and military capabilities necessary to prevail in a high-end conflict in a highly contested environment. I believe that continued effort to develop and field hypersonic air-launched weapons is essential and will enable us to hold high-value, time-sensitive targets at risk in contested environments from standoff distances. If confirmed, I will work to ensure this capability is prioritized in the Air Force's plans.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

## SPACE BASED TACTICAL INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE AND RECONNAISSANCE

39. Senator GILLIBRAND. Dr. Meink, the Space Force, National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), and National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) are working to establish the policies and procedures that will guide DOD's use of space-based tactical intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR). From your experience in NRO, how do you assess the progress of the work so far?

Dr. MEINK. I believe the Space Force, NRO, NGA, and NSA's collaborative efforts on space-based ISR policies and procedures are progressing positively. If confirmed, it is my intention to conduct a thorough assessment of the results of this partnership and focus on ensuring the department has the collection management and data dissemination authority to meet warfighter requirements.

40. Senator GILLIBRAND. Dr. Meink, as you likely step into the role as Secretary of the Air Force, what do you view as the proper role for the military versus the Intelligence Community (IC) in that arrangement?

Dr. MEINK. It is my understanding that the role of the Secretary of the Air Force is to organize, train, and equip the department with warfighting capabilities, which is an essential military function. Meanwhile, there is a shared responsibility with the Intelligence Community (IC), particularly regarding acquiring and operating intelligence systems that support military intelligence. The Secretary of the Air Force is responsible for the effective supervision and control of the intelligence activities of the Department of the Air Force. This includes those of the intelligence activities of the Space Force IC Element, the newest member of the Intelligence Community.

#### SPECIAL ACCESS PROGRAMS

41. Senator GILLIBRAND. Dr. Meink, in January of last year, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks signed a policy change establishing a process to enable DOD to bring down classification levels for systems previously designated Special Access Programs, or SAPs. Coming from your background in the space domain, what is your assessment of the implementation of that policy change?

Dr. MEINK. I am committed to protecting our Nation. This includes ensuring systems, capabilities, information, and technologies receive an appropriate level of protection without hindering development, collaboration, planning, and warfighting. My assessment is the implementation of DOD SAP policy is achievable while striking a balance between protections and preserving national security.

42. Senator GILLIBRAND. Dr. Meink, what actions will you take to address overclassification while protecting sensitive programs?

Dr. MEINK. I strongly believe enabling access to information as quickly and as broadly as possible is critical to national security. If confirmed, I will advocate for accurate classification and automated declassification were appropriate, while continuing to protect sensitive programs. If confirmed, I will conduct a review to ensure the Department classification processes and policies are aligned to prevent overclassification and ensure appropriate classification and timely downgrading or declassification decisions while protecting sensitive programs.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

##### BASE ENERGY RESILIENCY

43. Senator HIRONO. Dr. Meink, many Air Force and Space Force installations in Hawaii face climate, energy, and aging infrastructure challenges that threaten base resiliency, especially when faced with extreme climate events, as seen with the damage at Tyndall Air Force Base after Hurricane Michael. What specific steps would you take to address these issues and improve long-term operational resiliency at these critical bases in the Pacific?

Dr. MEINK. Air Force and Space Force installations, including those in Hawaii, face challenges posed by our adversaries as well as natural hazards. These potential disruptions threaten infrastructure, readiness, and operational resilience. If confirmed, I will work to prioritize investments in projects that improve infrastructure resilience, and I will ensure resilience is embedded in long-term planning efforts.

44. Senator HIRONO. Dr. Meink, how would you incorporate innovative infrastructure solutions—such as microgrids or hardened communications—into your broader strategy to ensure that Air and Space Force installations are ready for sustained operations?

Dr. MEINK. I am aware that the DAF recently finalized a new Installation Infrastructure Action Plan which will employ innovative approaches to infrastructure management to ensure we can continue to deliver combat power, and I support implementing the Action Plan.

Some of these approaches include expanding the installation of microgrids, leveraging innovative contracting approaches to accelerate the use of third-party financing, monetizing underutilized land and buildings to reduce financial liabilities, proactively divesting infrastructure to offset required recapitalization of mission critical assets, and prioritizing resources to the most critical war-fighting needs while driving down costs.

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## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

## ETHICS

45. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

46. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, will you commit to not engaging in any lobbying activities, including unregistered “shadow” or “behind-the-scenes” lobbying under the guise of consulting or advising on DOD-related matters, focused on DOD or any of its components for 4 years after leaving DOD?

Dr. MEINK. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

47. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. No.

48. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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.

Dr. MEINK. Not applicable; I was not approached about my loyalty to President Trump.

49. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you were approached about your loyalty to President Trump, did you make any verbal representations of loyalty? If so, please describe this representation.

Dr. MEINK. Not applicable; I was not approached about my loyalty to President Trump.

50. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. No.

51. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. Not applicable; I was not approached.

52. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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.

Dr. MEINK. No.

53. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you own any defense contractor stock, will you divest it to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will take action to divest those interests identified in my Ethics Agreement. I can pledge to you that I will be mindful of not only the legal requirements that govern my conduct, but also of the need to ensure that the public has no reason to question my impartiality, and I will consult with the Department's ethics officials should such issues arise. To the best of my knowledge, I have never had an investment that represented a conflict of interest throughout my 30 plus year government career.

54. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, will you commit not to retaliate, including by denying access to DOD officials or facilities, against news outlets or individual journalists who publish articles that are critical of you, your office, DOD, or the Trump administration?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

55. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, how many times have you been accused of sexually harassing, assaulting, or creating a hostile work environment for another individual in a personal or professional capacity? Provide a list of all instances in which you have been accused of sexually harassing, assaulting, or creating a hostile work environment for an individual and the behavior of which you were accused.

Dr. MEINK. I have never been accused of this type of behavior.

56. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, have you requested, or has anyone requested on your behalf, that any other person or third party sign a nondisclosure, confidentiality, non-disparagement, or similar agreement regarding your conduct in a personal or professional capacity?

Dr. MEINK. No.

57. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, will you voluntarily release any individual from any such agreements before your nomination hearing?

Dr. MEINK. Not applicable; I have not requested, or had anyone request on my behalf, these types of agreements.

58. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, have you ever paid or promised to pay, or has anyone paid or promised to pay on your behalf, an individual as part of any nondisclosure, confidentiality, non-disparagement, or similar agreement?

Dr. MEINK. No.

59. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if the answer to the question above was yes, how much was promised, how much was paid, and what were the circumstances?

Dr. MEINK. Not applicable.

60. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, Mr. Duffey, Mr. Michael, and Mr. Bass, will you commit to not seeking employment, board membership with, or another form of compensation from a company that you regulated or otherwise interacted with while in government, for at least 4 years after leaving office?

Dr. MEINK. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

61. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, were you at any time, or are you currently, contacted by or under investigation or review by any inspector general personnel for your role in contracting decisions, or for any other reason?

Dr. MEINK. No, not to my knowledge.

62. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if so, what is the status of the investigation(s)?

Dr. MEINK. Not applicable; there are no such investigations to my knowledge.

63. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you have not been under investigation or review by any inspector personnel, why do you think Reuters reported you were?

Dr. MEINK. I cannot speculate on the impetus for the Reuters article referenced in this question.

64. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, have you ever been counseled or advised that your working relationship with SpaceX or Mr. Musk creates a conflict of interest?  
Dr. MEINK. No.

65. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if the answer to the question above is yes, who counseled or advised you of this conflict, and what action did you take?

Dr. MEINK. Not applicable; I have never been counseled or advised that I have a conflict of interest.

66. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what is the nature of your relationship with SpaceX and Mr. Musk?

Dr. MEINK. I have no relationship with SpaceX or Mr. Musk outside of a professional relationship in the execution of my current duties.

67. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what role did Mr. Musk play in your nomination to be Secretary of the Air Force?

Dr. MEINK. None to my knowledge; I was nominated by the President of the United States for this position.

68. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, did you ask Mr. Musk to support or recommend your nomination?

Dr. MEINK. No.

69. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, did you have conversations with Mr. Musk regarding the nomination? If so, please describe the nature of these conversations.

Dr. MEINK. Mr. Musk was one of many people present at one of the interviews I had with President Trump. However, the President was the only one who asked me questions. I'm honored President Trump nominated me for the position as Secretary of the Department of the Air Force.

70. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, did Mr. Musk ask for anything in return for supporting your nomination?

Dr. MEINK. I reject the premise of this question; I was nominated by the President of the United States for this position.

71. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, Reuters reported that you altered key details of a major contract, effectively boxing out other companies from bidding. Are these reports accurate?

Dr. MEINK. No.

72. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, did you alter the details of this contract?

Dr. MEINK. No.

73. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you did alter the details of this contract, why did you do so?

Dr. MEINK. Not applicable; I have not altered the details of any contract.

74. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, reports further suggest that you threatened to withhold future contracts from L3Harris if the company filed a formal complaint. Did you threaten or imply that you would withhold future contracts from L3Harris or any other contractors if they filed complaints, bid protests, or cooperated with the Inspector General's investigation?

Dr. MEINK. No, and I'm not aware of any investigation.

75. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, would it ever be appropriate to threaten or imply that you would withhold future contracts from a company if they filed a complaint, bid protest, or cooperated with an Inspector General, civil, or criminal investigation?

Dr. MEINK. Dr. MEINK. No, and I'm unaware of any investigation.

76. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, have you ever threatened or implied that you would withhold future contracts from a company if they filed a complaint, bid protest, or cooperated with an inspector general or other investigation?

Dr. MEINK. No, and I'm unaware of any investigation.

77. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if confirmed to be Secretary of the Air Force, what role would you play in DOD acquisition negotiations with contractors like SpaceX?

Dr. MEINK. None; acquisition negotiations would be the purview of the acquisition executives in the Department.

78. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you think it is valuable to encourage competition and innovation in the defense industrial base?

Dr. MEINK. Yes, and I have helped expand competition to the highest levels in my current organization.

79. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, on February 11th, Mr. Musk held a press conference in the Oval Office where he claimed that every Government contract awarded to SpaceX was “by far the best value for money for the taxpayer.” If confirmed to be Secretary of the Air Force, what measures would you take to ensure a robust bidding process to encourage competition for DOD projects?

Dr. MEINK. I have a long and distinguished record of encouraging innovation, competition and expanding the industrial base during my time at the NRO. If confirmed, I would bring that experience to the Department of the Air Force and ensure that leadership at all levels was actively encouraging innovation and competition in the defense industrial base.

80. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, in November 2024, Mr. Musk wrote on X (formerly Twitter) that “manned fighter jets are obsolete in the age of drones” and called those building jets like the F-35 “idiots”. Do you agree with Mr. Musk’s characterization of fifth-generation stealth fighters?

Dr. MEINK. I do not associate myself with those remarks.

#### CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT AND TRANSPARENCY

81. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what is your understanding of the role of the Department of Defense Inspector General and service Inspectors General?

Dr. MEINK. To my knowledge, the mission of the DOD IG is to promote the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of DOD programs, and the integrity of its work-force and operations, through impactful audits, evaluations, investigations, and reviews. The role of the Air Force IG is to independently and objectively inspect, investigate, and inquire into matters of importance to the Department of the Air Force, to include waste, fraud, and abuse. I will continue to support the independence of the IG as I have done throughout my career.

82. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

83. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will work to comply with Inspector General requests in a timely manner. I would defer to the Office of the Inspector General to update members of the Committee regarding the progress of the Inspector General’s ongoing reviews.

84. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, will you commit to refusing to follow illegal orders from any individual, including the President?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will follow the law and the Constitution of the United States.

85. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what actions would you take if you were given an illegal order from any individual, including the President?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I would have a duty not to carry out a manifestly unlawful order.

86. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, will you commit to testify or provide a deposition if you are called upon by Congress to provide a deposition voluntarily?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

87. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, will you commit to testify or provide a deposition to Congress if you are issued a subpoena to testify?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

88. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, will you commit to providing information or documents to Congress voluntarily if you are requested to do so?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

89. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, will you provide information or documents to Congress if you are issued a subpoena?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

90. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

91. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if confirmed, will you commit to posting your official calendar monthly?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I am committed to meeting all legal disclosure requirements.

92. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you think DOD has an overclassification problem? If so, please provide this committee with an estimate of the number or percentage of documents that will be under your purview that are overclassified.

Dr. MEINK. I strongly believe enabling access to information as quickly and as broadly as possible is critical to national security. If confirmed I will continue to work with data owners to ensure data is not overclassified.

93. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, to the best of your knowledge, is your service or component identifying records for proactive posting in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act? If not, please describe how you would ensure that they do so to comply with public records law.

Dr. MEINK. I have not received any briefing on the Department of the Air Force's current Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) program. If confirmed, I will review that program to ensure it is aligned with law.

94. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if confirmed, do you think your department should pursue strategic technology to support automated declassification?

Dr. MEINK. I believe such pursuits would need to be standardized throughout the Department of Defense, not just at the military Department level. I strongly believe enabling access to information as quickly and as broadly as possible is critical to national security. If confirmed I will advocate for automated declassification where appropriate, while continuing to protect sensitive programs.

#### PROJECT 2025

95. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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.

Dr. MEINK. No.

96. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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.

Dr. MEINK. No.

#### NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MISSILE DEFENSE

97. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what do you understand your role to be in ensuring that programs do not reach this significant cost overrun threshold if you are confirmed?

Dr. MEINK. I believe that nuclear deterrence is the foundation of our national security. The nuclear modernization of the Department of the Air Force includes the ground leg of the nuclear triad, which is long overdue for revitalization. If confirmed, I commit to making nuclear modernization my highest priority and ensuring that the Department is a responsible steward of taxpayer funds for these purposes. Furthermore, I see my role as ensuring that leadership at all levels in the Department—to include those working on these programs—share that philosophy.

## FOREIGN INFLUENCE

98. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, have you received any payment from a foreign government or entity controlled by a foreign government within the past 5 years?  
Dr. MEINK. No.

99. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, have you communicated with any foreign government or entity controlled by a foreign government within the past 5 years?  
Dr. MEINK. I have provided relevant information in connection with my security clearance background check.

100. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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.

Dr. MEINK. I have provided relevant information in connection with my security clearance background check.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT

101. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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 your service or component?

Sexual assault and sexual harassment have no place in the Air Force or the total force. I am—and always have been—a passionate champion of the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual assault. My record at the NRO substantiates this and I plan on bringing that same passion to the Department. It is my understanding that the Department and its two subordinate military services have programs in place to combat these harmful behaviors. I believe it takes leadership at all levels, however, to enforce healthy and respectful workplace practices within their echelons. If confirmed, I commit to bringing the same leadership philosophy I have had at NRO to the Department of the Air Force and ensuring the healthiest command climates for our Airmen, Guardians, civilians and their families.

102. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, how do you plan to support and protect your department servicemembers, civilians, grantees, and contractors who come forward with reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to encouraging healthy command climates at all levels that promote greater reporting of sexual assault and sexual harassment to connect victims with care and hold alleged offenders appropriately accountable. I pledge to communicate consistently and persistently that the Department must take allegations seriously, respond to them promptly, and comply with the full letter of the law.

103. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, the Air Force Academy phased out the Enhanced Access Knowledge Act, a sexual assault prevention program that showed success at other universities, following a spike in unwanted sexual contact among cadets and across the military. If confirmed, will you review the adequacy of the Academy's programs to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Dr. MEINK. I am not familiar with this program and have not yet been briefed on it. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the adequacy of the Academy's sexual assault prevention programs.

104. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, should cadets, servicemembers, or civilians who report sexual assault be prosecuted if their report does not result in a successful conviction?

Dr. MEINK. I believe all cadets, servicemembers, and civilians should be treated with dignity and respect. The treatment of these individuals should furthermore comport with all applicable laws and regulations regarding discrimination, bullying and hazing.

105. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, how should cadets, servicemembers, or civilians who report sexual assault be treated if their report does not result in a successful conviction?

Dr. MEINK. I believe all cadets, servicemembers, and civilians should be treated with dignity and respect. The treatment of these individuals should furthermore comport with all applicable laws and regulations regarding discrimination, bullying and hazing.

106. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you support allowing women who have become pregnant or started families to return to the Air Force Academy?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, my role as Secretary of the Air Force is to organize, train and equip the two subordinate military services. While I have not had a chance to review the topic of cadets in these situations returning to the Academy, I commit to reviewing the issue and complying with all Department of Defense guidance on the topic.

#### RETALIATION AND PROTECTING WHISTLEBLOWERS

107. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. Yes, I believe that all whistleblower laws should be followed, and protections should be provided to whistleblowers according to applicable statute.

108. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, have you ever retaliated against any individual for coming forward about an illegal order, sexual assault or harassment, negligence, misconduct, or any other concern that they wish to raise?

Dr. MEINK. No.

109. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, will you commit to protecting whistleblowers? If so, please specify how you will do so.

Dr. MEINK. Yes, if confirmed, I will commit to protecting whistleblowers in accordance with applicable laws. I will work with the General Counsel of the Department to ensure compliance with these laws throughout the process.

#### IMPOUNDMENT CONTROL ACT

110. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, on January 27, 2025, President Trump's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memo calling for the suspension all Federal financial assistance programs (excluding "assistance provided directly to individuals"). Do you agree with OMB's decision to issue this memo?

Dr. MEINK. I have not been briefed on the impact, if any, this decision has had on the Department of the Air Force. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing any impacts this has had on Department missions and functions.

111. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you believe the Secretary of Defense has the legal authority to block the disbursement of funds appropriated by Congress?

Dr. MEINK. 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.

112. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what is your understanding of the Impoundment Control Act (ICA)?

Dr. MEINK. My understanding is that the Impoundment Control Act defines an impoundment as an action or inaction by an officer or employee of the United States that delays or precludes the obligation or expenditure of budget authority. The Act divides impoundment into two categories: rescissions or deferrals. Proposals for budget authority rescissions rest in the President, and deferrals of budget authority may be proposed by the President, Secretary of Defense, or the Secretary of the Air Force.

113. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you commit to following the Impoundment Control Act?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to following all laws.

114. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to complying with applicable legal requirements regarding responding to requests from Congress.

115. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. I have not reviewed the constitutionality of impoundments and would defer to the judgment of the Supreme Court.

116. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. I defer to the judgment of Congress on the utility of such changes to appropriations bills being passed into law.

117. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. As I understand it, the DOD's ability to obligate funding is limited to the period of availability stipulated in law. An appropriation or fund is therefore not available for expenditure for a period beyond that which is authorized by law.

118. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you commit to expending the money that Congress appropriates and authorizes?

Dr. MEINK. I commit to being a good steward of taxpayer funds, as I have always been in my decades of public service, and will comply with all applicable laws regarding the obligation and expenditure of appropriations to the Department of the Air Force.

119. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you commit to following and implementing every provision of the annual National Defense Authorization Act passed into law?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to following all laws.

#### CIVILIAN HARM

120. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

121. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what is your understanding of title 10 U.S.C. 184, which established the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence?

Dr. MEINK. I have not received a brief on this, but I understand it to fall under the purview of the Secretary of Defense.

122. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, the U.S. military has spent many years working to improve its ability to prevent and mitigate civilian harm without sacrificing lethality—including through the development of the DOD Instruction on Civilian Harm under the first Trump administration, which I commend. These efforts received bipartisan support from Congress and grew out of a recognition from the U.S. military itself that, after over 2 decades of U.S. wars, warfighters needed better tools and trustworthy systems to prevent civilian harm, uphold U.S. values, and prevent the moral injury and psychological trauma that too often comes with deadly mistakes. If confirmed, will you commit to continued leadership on civilian harm issues?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to preventing and/or mitigating civilian harm without jeopardizing lethality or the safety of our Airmen and Guardians.

123. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, what do you understand to be your role and responsibilities regarding civilian harm mitigation and response?

Dr. MEINK. I have not been briefed on my role and responsibilities. According to Title 10, the role of the Secretary of the Air Force is to organize, train and equip the Department of the Air Force. While the operational roles and responsibilities regarding civilian harm mitigation and response likely fall under the Combatant Com-

mands, I will certainly do everything I can under my Title 10 responsibilities to assist.

124. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what do you understand to be the importance of mitigating civilian harm in military operations?

Dr. MEINK. I believe this mitigation is incredibly important to our country and to the Department and is in line with our core values.

125. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, will you commit to supporting and protecting the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing this program and better understanding what role, if any, I would have.

126. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, how will you prevent and mitigate civilian harm?

Dr. MEINK. According to Title 10, the role of the Secretary of the Air Force is to organize, train and equip the Department of the Air Force. While the operational roles and responsibilities regarding civilian harm mitigation and response likely fall under the Combatant Commands, I will certainly do everything I can under my Title 10 responsibilities to assist.

127. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, will you commit to supporting and implementing the Civilian Harm Mitigation Response and Action Plan (CHMR-AP)?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing this program and better understanding what role, if any, I would have.

128. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, 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?

Dr. MEINK. I believe that our servicemembers are placed at risk in many military operations throughout the world. If confirmed, I see it as my charge to ensure they are the best organized, trained, and equipped force to mitigate that risk.

#### BLAST OVERPRESSURE

129. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, will you commit to protecting servicemembers from blast overpressure and increasing their options for seeking care after being exposed?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

130. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, what steps will you take to protect servicemembers from blast overpressure and increase their options for seeking care after being exposed?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Defense Health Agency as well as my counterparts in our sister services on identifying best practices and ensuring that treatment options are available to our Airmen and Guardians. I will then work within the Department to implement those best practices.

131. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, how do you plan to work with the Department of Veterans Affairs to make sure that servicemembers, veterans, and their families are aware of the risks of blast overpressure and traumatic brain injury?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I would not do this alone; I would work with my sister services, in concert with the office of the Secretary of Defense, to ensure an information campaign between both Departments was in place and, if need be, revitalized. I would then ensure command teams at all echelons were educated and informed of the resources available to them.

132. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you support establishing logs for troops on blast overpressure exposure and traumatic brain injury?

Dr. MEINK. While I have not yet been briefed on this topic, if confirmed I would review the efficacy of maintaining such logs if they could provide better response options for our Airmen and Guardians.

133. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you support requiring neurocognitive assessments of troops annually, before they begin training to establish a baseline, and before they leave the military to determine when their change in cognitive health over time?

Dr. MEINK. While I have not yet been briefed on this topic, if confirmed I would review the efficacy of establishing these baselines at these points in their service if they could provide better response options for our Airmen and Guardians.

134. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, how will you address the links between blast overpressure exposure and increased risks of suicide?

Dr. MEINK. I have not been briefed on any link between this exposure and increased risk of suicide, but, if confirmed, will request to learn more about any connections.

135. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what steps would you take to improve suicide prevention efforts, including investing in peer support programs, crisis intervention, and community-based mental health initiatives?

Dr. MEINK. While I support the initiatives mentioned in the question, I believe the most crucial component to this will be removing the stigma sometimes attached to servicemembers who seek help. I believe this is a leadership issue. Command teams at all levels need to communicate to their formations and be empowered to remove the stigma associated with asking for help. If confirmed, I pledge to push that philosophy down through every echelon of the Department.

136. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, it appears that U.S. Army Green Beret Master Sgt. Matthew Livelsberger, who died by suicide in a cybertruck explosion on January 1, 2025, may have had a history of traumatic brain injury. What do you understand to be the consequences and long-term effects of blast overpressure exposure and brain injury on servicemembers?

Dr. MEINK. While I have not yet been briefed on this topic, if confirmed I would review the consequences and long-term effects of blast overpressure and seek to understand how such knowledge could provide better response options for our Airmen and Guardians.

137. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you support addressing the risks of blast overpressure to servicemembers through the swift implementation of sections 721 through section 725 of the Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

138. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, which occupational specialties do you understand to be at the highest risk for blast overpressure exposure in the Air Force?

Dr. MEINK. While any Airman or Guardian may be put into harms way in the execution of their duties and all specialties/communities within our Department must be reviewed, I understand that our Special Tactics Airmen and other specialty codes that are often embedded with ground maneuver elements of other services are at an increased risk of exposure to blast overpressure.

#### RIGHT-TO-REPAIR

139. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you believe giving DOD access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could advance DOD's readiness?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

140. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you believe giving DOD access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could help reduce DOD's repair and sustainment costs?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

141. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, how will you ensure servicemembers in your service or component, who are stationed abroad, can timely and cost-effectively repair equipment when needed, especially in a contested logistics environment?

Dr. MEINK. As I understand it, the Air Force's Agile Combat Employment model may require our forces to operate from austere locations with little support and to infil and exfil rapidly from those locations. This does not allow for the same logistics timelines to which we've been accustomed, and certainly not in a contested environment. Our Airmen will need to be authorized and empowered to manufacture parts and fix their equipment without relying on normal supply chains. This will require greater experimentation with advanced and self-sufficient sustainment capabilities. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing how we can experiment further with these concepts during our exercises.

142. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, will you commit to including right-to-repair/technical data rights clauses in acquisition contracts that your service or component enters into?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to complying with laws and regulations governing acquisitions. Furthermore, I commit to reviewing where we can better leverage right-to-repair in our future acquisition contracts and look forward to working with partners at USD A&S on those initiatives.

143. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, will you commit to ensuring contractors deliver technical data rights to your service or component when their contract requires or allows it?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

144. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, will you commit to conducting an assessment of the cost of not having the right-to-repair/technical data rights for your service's or component's equipment, the results of which you would make public for review by Congress and the Department of Government Efficiency?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to conducting an assessment and complying with all applicable laws and Department regulations regarding the public release of that assessment.

#### ACQUISITION REFORM

145. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what is your understanding of the Procurement Integrity Act and your obligations under that law?

Dr. MEINK. The law prohibits the release of source selection information or information relating to contractor bids or proposals. If confirmed as Secretary, I will ensure the Department of the Air Force complies with the law.

146. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you believe that it is important to be able to assess accurate cost and pricing data from contractors, especially for sole-or single-source contracts?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will work with Department stakeholders and the acquisition workforce to ensure the Department has access to accurate cost and pricing data as required by law.

147. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, how do you plan to obtain cost and pricing data from contractors to determine that the cost of DOD contracts is fair and reasonable?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will continue to ensure contractors deliver cost and pricing data required by contract. I will use all legal tools available to ensure that delivery.

148. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, how do you plan to do so in cases where contractors refuse or claim they are unable to turn over this data?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will continue to use all legal tools available to ensure that delivery.

149. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that contractors are not price gouging or overcharging DOD?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will continue to use all legal tools available to ensure that price gouging or overcharging are not taking place.

150. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed will you commit to seeking refunds from contractors and companies that overcharge DOD?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will continue to seek redress in full compliance of what the law will allow.

151. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if so, how do you plan to do so?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will continue to seek redress in full compliance of what the law will allow.

152. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you believe there is excessive consolidation in the defense industry?

Dr. MEINK. I believe that a greater number of competitive companies is healthy for our defense industrial base.

153. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if so, what do you believe to be the ramifications of that consolidation?

Dr. MEINK. A lack of competition can result in decreased innovation, higher costs, lower performance, and longer schedules.

154. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you are confirmed, how will you support competition in the defense industry?

Dr. MEINK. In my multiple years at the NRO, I have had a strong record of encouraging innovation, increasing competition, and expanding the industry base. I plan on leveraging that experience and, if confirmed, bringing those lessons learned to the Department of the Air Force.

155. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what do you understand to be the role of independent cost estimates in the acquisition process?

Dr. MEINK. I believe independent cost estimates, which are generally more accurate, are fundamental to the acquisition process. The interchange between cost estimates, requirements and program management is critical to successful acquisitions.

156. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, how should DOD establish program schedules and milestones?

Dr. MEINK. The establishment of program schedules and milestones is governed by DOD Instruction 5000.02. I would defer to the broader DOD acquisition executive and to the Secretary of Defense for changes to that instruction. If confirmed, I would work with those offices to ensure the Department is in compliance with the instruction.

157. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, would it be appropriate for DOD to establish program schedules to achieve partisan electoral outcomes?

Dr. MEINK. I believe program schedules should serve the American people, ensuring that their taxpayer dollars are always considered a precious resource, and ensuring that the achievement of national security objectives are the highest priority. These are the philosophies that should govern program schedules.

158. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, should DOD acquisition decisions be influenced by partisan political activities?

Dr. MEINK. No.

159. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, should DOD acquisition decisions be influenced by individuals with conflicts of interest that involve DOD?

Dr. MEINK. No.

#### RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

160. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, does DOD benefit from partnering with colleges, universities, nonprofits, and federally funded research and development centers?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

161. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, under your leadership, will DOD continue to work with colleges, universities, nonprofits, and federally funded research and development centers to research and address our toughest national security challenges?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to work with colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, and federally funded research and development centers to develop new and transformative capabilities for the Warfighter consistent with the Administration's mission and priorities.

162. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, on March 20, 2025, DOD announced it was terminating \$360 million in grants. What is your understanding of DOD's criteria for canceling grants?

Dr. MEINK. I have not been briefed on this decision or the analysis that went into that decision. If confirmed, I would request a brief to better understand this criteria.

163. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what should DOD's criteria for canceling grants be?

Dr. MEINK. I have not been briefed on the criteria that go into decisions regarding grants. If confirmed, I would request a brief to better understand the criteria.

164. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, who should be involved in decisions to cancel DOD grants?

Dr. MEINK. I have not been briefed on the criteria that go into decisions regarding grants. If confirmed, I would request a brief to better understand this criteria.

165. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, does DOD invest enough in research and development?

Dr. MEINK. I believe DOD funding for research and development is vital. I also believe taking advantage of commercial investments is critical as there are many areas where those investments far exceed that of the department. In addition, we need to incentivize defense industry to focus on long-term production versus short-term profits. By doing so, I believe companies will be more likely to use their own capital toward greater research and development.

166. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do defense contractors invest enough in research and development?

Dr. MEINK. I could not make a general statement about all defense contractors with my limited knowledge of their R&D expenditures. But as stated previously, I believe that we should incentivize defense industry to focus on long-term production versus short-term profits. By doing so, I believe companies will be more likely to use their own capital toward greater research and development.

167. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what should DOD's top research and development priorities be?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed I will focus DAF R&D priorities to meet the priorities of the SECDEF and the Interim National Defense Strategy Guidance. I will ensure DAF R&D is focused to address mission needs to deliver these priorities and focused on capability gaps and opportunities. Prudent investment also requires leveraging the entire DOD ecosystem including Service and Agency partners and the larger commercial and industrial base.

PROTECTING CLASSIFIED INFORMATION AND FEDERAL RECORDS

168. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what is your understanding of the need to protect operational security, or OPSEC?

Dr. MEINK. OPSEC is of paramount importance and is everyone's responsibility in the Department of Defense. As the Deputy Director of the NRO and a member of the IC, I have a strong record of protecting OPSEC and encouraging all members of my organization to do likewise.

169. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what are the national security risks of improperly disclosing classified information?

Dr. MEINK. It is generally accepted that the improper or unauthorized disclosure of classified information could be expected to cause identifiable or describable damage to national security. The describable damage and certainty of that damage would depend on the details of the information released, including the level of classification, as well as the extent and nature of the disclosure. Determining the extent of damage to national security is part of the unauthorized disclosure process as outlined in DOD policy, and I would defer to the Department for additional specifics.

170. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, is it your opinion that information about imminent military targets is generally sensitive information that needs to be protected?

Dr. MEINK. While I do not have enough information to make a judgment in the scope of this question, I will commit to adhering to the information and security policies of the Department of Defense and will ensure all of those who work for me do the same.

171. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what would you do if you learned an official had improperly disclosed classified information?

Dr. MEINK. I would follow the security protocols governing that disclosure as I have for my entire career. If confirmed, I commit to adhering to the information and security policies of the Department of Defense and will ensure all of those who work for me do the same.

172. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what is your understanding of Government officials' duties under the Federal Records Act?

Dr. MEINK. It is the responsibility of all government officials in Federal agencies to manage their records efficiently, and maintain and dispose of them in accordance with governing laws and regulations.

173. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, should classified information be shared on unclassified commercial systems?

Dr. MEINK. As per the DOD's Information Security Program, only computers and IT systems approved and accredited for Classified National Security Information may be used for classified communications.

174. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, is it damaging to national security if the pilots flying a mission find out that the official who ordered them to perform that mission shared sensitive information that could have made it more likely that the mission would fail or they would be killed?

Dr. MEINK. I would have to be familiar with the original classification or details of the information to which you are referring. I am not in a position to be able to provide an opinion of substance without more information.

175. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, if you had information about the status of specific targets, weapons being used, and timing for imminent U.S. strikes against an adversary, under what circumstances would you feel comfortable receiving or sharing that information on an unclassified commercial application like Signal?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, I will always follow proper information security protocols in accordance with the Department of Defense Policy.

#### INFORMATION AIR DOMINANCE CENTER

176. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, do you support the Air Force creating a new Information Dominance Center?

Dr. MEINK. I have not been fully briefed on the extent of the Department of the Air Force's "Great Power Competition" initiative, to include the Information Dominance Systems Center, to make a judgment. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving an in-depth briefing on this initiative, reviewing the data and analysis, and making my own assessment. I commit to sharing the results of that assessment with this committee.

177. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, what do you see as the role of a new Information Dominance Systems Center in supporting great power competition?

Dr. MEINK. I have not been fully briefed on the extent of the Department of the Air Force's "Great Power Competition" initiative, to include the Information Dominance Systems Center, to make a judgment. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving an in-depth briefing on this initiative, reviewing the data and analysis, and making my own assessment. I commit to sharing the results of that assessment with this committee.

178. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, when do you think you will have completed your review of any holds related to re-optimization for great power competition?

Dr. MEINK. I am committed to ensuring our Nation is prepared to meet the pacing challenge. If confirmed, I will prioritize my review of any holds related to re-optimization for great power competition.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

##### NEVADA TEST AND TRAINING RANGE

179. Senator ROSEN. Dr. Meink, Nevada is proud to host the "Crown Jewel" of the Air Force, the Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR), which provides the largest air and ground military training space in the lower 48 for testing and evaluation of weapons systems, tactics development, and advanced air combat training—without interference from commercial aircraft. NTTR modernization has been among the Air Force's top priorities to ensure our high-end training keeps pace with current and emerging threats and capabilities. I am glad that we were finally able to pass modernization in the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA after many years of collaborative work between the Nevada delegation, Air Force, Department of Interior, and local stakeholders. What are your priorities for future investments in the NTTR?

Dr. MEINK. If confirmed, my NTTR investment priorities include enhancing Live, Virtual, and Constructive training, and modernizing threat replication with advanced systems. These investments will ensure NTTR remains the premier training and testing environment for our warfighters, maintaining our air superiority in the face of evolving threats.

180. Senator ROSEN. Dr. Meink, how do you envision the range evolving to support the Air Force's modernization efforts, particularly with emerging technologies like unmanned systems and artificial intelligence—such as the Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA)?

Dr. MEINK. NTTR's vast airspace and advanced threat replication capabilities make it ideal for developing and testing unmanned systems and AI, including Collaborative Combat Aircraft. NTTR remains at the forefront of Air Force modernization, providing a crucial proving ground for these transformative technologies, and ultimately preparing our warfighters to dominate in future conflicts.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARK KELLY

AIR FORCE MODERNIZATION AND READINESS

181. Senator KELLY. Dr. Meink, since 1987, the Air Force's fighter fleet has shrunk by 60 percent. The Air National Guard fighter fleet is a significant contributor to our Total Force, with 25 fighter squadrons across 22 States, but it's being left behind as the Air Force reoptimizes for Great Power Competition. The Air Force is rapidly divesting legacy aircraft, including A-10's, F-15Cs and older F-16s, which disproportionately affects the National Guard since it operates 27 percent of the Air Force fighters while flying 53 percent of the oldest fighters slated for divestment. The lack of a comprehensive plan that would provide for the concurrent and proportional modernization and recapitalization of the Guard fighter fleet presents a risk to our Nation's defense.

That's why Senator Crapo and I led the Fighter Force Preservation and Recapitalization Act, which was partially included in the NDAA and requires the Secretary of the Air Force to develop a plan to sustain and recapitalize the ANG fighter fleet at a similar rate as the Active components of the Armed Forces. I am looking forward to reviewing this plan.

Are you concerned with the health of the Air National Guard fighter fleet?

Dr. MEINK. Yes, I am concerned with the health of our entire Total Force fleet, including the Air National Guard, which plays an out-sized role.

182. Senator KELLY. Dr. Meink, what do you believe is the best way ensure the Air National Guard has a sufficient fighter force to defend Americans at home and abroad?

Dr. MEINK. While I have not been briefed yet on all of the contributions of the Air National Guard to the Air Force's future force structure, I am confident that the Guard will continue to play an out-sized role. If confirmed, I look forward to conducting my own assessment of our force structure and will commit to sharing the results of that assessment with you and the Committee.

183. Senator KELLY. Dr. Meink, if confirmed, will you commit to working with me and my colleagues to advance Air National Guard fighter recapitalization?

Dr. MEINK. Yes.

REMOTE SENSING CAPABILITIES

184. Senator KELLY. Dr. Meink, during your time at the NRO, you played a key role in shifting the agency's mindset and actively pushed for the incorporating of commercial capabilities, leading a significant acquisition of commercial remote sensing capabilities. You achieved this through an establishment of a service level agreement (SLA), prioritizing and more fully integrating commercial capabilities into the planned architecture. This model proved highly effective, and I'm interested in seeing it applied to other mission areas, such as Space Domain Awareness, where there will be a long-term need for expanded tracking and monitoring. How do you view the potential to apply this approach as Secretary of the Air Force?

Dr. MEINK. I believe very strongly that our Space Force will need to continue leveraging commercial capabilities to ensure a resilient space architecture for our joint force. I fully expect to bring many of the lessons learned from my experience at the NRO leveraging commercial capabilities to the Department of the Air Force. I have not been fully briefed on the Space Force's Commercial Space Strategy, but—if confirmed—I look forward to assessing that strategy and I will commit to sharing the results of that assessment with you and this Committee.

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[The nomination reference of Dr. Troy E. Meink follows:]

**NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT**

**PN12-30**

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:

Troy Meink, of Virginia, to be Secretary of the Air Force, vice Frank Kendall III, 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 Dr. Troy E. Meink, which was transmitted by the Committee at the time of the nomination was referred, follows:]

**Dr. Troy Meink**

**Education:**

- South Dakota State University
  - Dates Attended: 1983-1988
  - B.S. Mechanical Engineering
- Ohio State University
  - Attended: 1993-1995
  - M.S. Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering
- Ohio State University
  - Attended: 1997-1999
  - PhD Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering

**Employment Record:**

- Air Force Navigator and Instructor Navigator, Grissom AFB, Indiana
  - August 1988 - September 1993
- Flight Test Engineer and Deputy Program Manager (Air Force Reserve), National Air Intelligence Center, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio
  - June 1994 - March 1998
- Program Manager and Senior Research Engineer, Air Force Research Laboratory, Kirtland AFB, New Mexico
  - August 1994 – February 2001
- Chief Technical Adviser, Space Vehicles Directorate, Air Force Research Laboratory, Kirtland AFB, New Mexico
  - February 2001 - March 2002
- Director, Military Satellite Communications Innovations Center, Space and Missile Systems Center, Los Angeles AFB, California
  - March 2002 - June 2003
- Program Director, Transformational Satellite Communications Systems, Military Satellite Communications Joint Program Office, Space and Missile Systems Center, Los Angeles AFB, Calif.
  - June 2003 - January 2005

- Director, Communications Directorate, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Networks and Information Integration), the Pentagon, Washington, D.C.
  - November 2005 – October 2008
- Director, Signals Intelligence Systems Acquisition, National Reconnaissance Office, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force for Space and Technology, Chantilly, Va.
  - October 2008 - November 2013
- Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force for Space; and Director, Executive Agent for Space Staff, Washington, D.C.
  - November 2013 – June 2014
- Assistant Director of National Intelligence for Systems and Resource Analyses, Washington, D.C.
  - June 2014 – May 2017
- Director of Geospatial Intelligence Systems Acquisition, National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), Chantilly, VA
  - May 2017 – October 2020
- Principal Deputy Director, NRO, Chantilly, VA.
  - October 2020 – Present

**Honors and Awards:**

- Three Presidential Rank Awards
- Dr. Joseph V. Charyk Award, National Space Clubs
- Stellar Award for Space Achievement, NASA
- Associate Fellow, American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
- John J. Welch Jr. Award, Air Force Space Command
- U.S. Air Force Agile Acquisition Transformational Leadership Award
- Aerial Achievement Medal; Combat Readiness Medal; Southwest Asia Svc Medal W/3 Devices; Humanitarian Svc Medal; Small Arms Expert Ribbon
- Distinguished graduate, undergraduate navigator training

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[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 Dr. Troy E. Meink in connection with his nomination follows:]

119<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, 2025 -- 2026  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
ROOM SR-228  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-6050  
(202) 224-3871

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES QUESTIONNAIRE  
INFORMATION REQUESTED OF CIVILIAN NOMINEES

**INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE:** Answer all questions and provide all requested information. If more space is needed, attach an additional sheet of paper to the Questionnaire and cite the part of the Questionnaire and the question number (e.g., A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies. Unless otherwise required, an answer of "yes", "no", or "not applicable" is appropriate.

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART A

**NOTE:** Information furnished in this part of the Questionnaire will be made available in Committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearing, if any, and will be entered in the hearing record, also available to the public.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC

1. **Name (Include any former names you have used):** *Troy Edward Meink*
2. **Position to which nominated:** *Secretary of the Air Force*
3. **Date of nomination:** *20-Jan-2025*
4. **Education (List names of secondary and higher education institution attended, type of school [vocational, technical, trade school, college, university, military college, correspondence, distance, extension, and on-line], dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted):**
  - *South Dakota State University*
    - *Dates Attended: 1983-1988*
    - *B.S. Mechanical Engineering*

- *Ohio State University*
    - *Attended: 1993-1995*
    - *M.S. Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering*
  - *Ohio State University*
    - *Attended: 1997-1999*
    - *PhD Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering*
5. **Employment record (List all jobs held since college, or in the last 10 years, whichever is less, including the title or description of the job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment. If the employment activity was military duty, show each change of military duty station as a separate period of employment):**
- *Assistant Director of National Intelligence for Systems and Resource Analyses, Washington, D.C: June 2014 – May 2017*
  - *Director of Geospatial Intelligence Systems Acquisition, National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), Chantilly, VA: May 2017 – October 2020*
  - *Principal Deputy Director, NRO, Chantilly, VA: October 2020 – Present*
6. **Have you ever received approval, pursuant to section 908 of title 37, United States Code, to accept civil employment (and compensation for that employment), payment for speeches, travel, meals, lodging, registration fees, or a non-cash award from a foreign government? *No***
7. **Government experience (List any advisory, consultative, honorary, and other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed in response to question 5, above):**  
*None*
8. **Business relationships (List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, and of any educational or other institution):** *United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation (USGIF) Board Advisor*
9. **Memberships (List all memberships and offices that you currently hold, as well as any memberships and offices you have previously held in**

**professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable and other organizations):** *Associate Fellow, American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA)*

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): *None*
  - b. List all memberships and offices held in, and services rendered to, all political parties or election committees during the last 5 years: *None*
  - c. Itemize all individual political contributions of \$100 or more to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity during the past 5 years. List each individual contribution (not the total amount contributed to the person or entity) over this period: *None*
11. **Honors and awards (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements):**
- *Three Presidential Rank Awards*
  - *Associate Fellow, American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA)*
  - *Air Force Palace Knight Graduate Scholarship*
  - *Air Force ROTC Undergraduate Scholarship*
12. **Published writings (List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, or other published materials that you have written or for which you served as co-author or editor, including articles and blogs published on the internet):** *See attachment Publications\_Meink.pdf*
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).** *See attachment Speeches\_Meink.pdf*

**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? *Yes*
15. Do you agree, if confirmed, to provide this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so timely? *Yes*
16. Do you agree, if confirmed, to consult with this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? *Yes*
17. Do you agree, if confirmed, to keep this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? *Yes*
18. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this Committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? *Yes*
19. Do you agree, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this Committee? *Yes*
20. Do you agree, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? *Yes*

**FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS**

21. **If you are confirmed by the Senate, will you sever all business connections with your present employers, business firms, business associations, and business organizations? *Yes***
  
22. **Do you have any plans, commitments or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government? If so, explain. *No***

### Journal Papers

1. Huybrechts, S., Meink, T., Wegner, P., and Ganley, J., "Manufacturing Theory for Advanced Grid Stiffened Structures", *Journal of Composites*, 2001.
2. Huybrechts, S., Maji, A., Lao, J., Wegner, P., and Meink, T., "The Addition of Out-of-Plane Shear Terms to Quadratic Composite Failure Criteria", *Journal of Composite Materials* 2001.
3. George, T., Shen, M.-H., Huybrechts S., Meink, T., Wegner, P., "Optimal Design of Composite ChamberCore Structures", *Composite Structures* Art. 1547 2001
4. George, T., "ASME,
5. Meink, T., Huybrechts, S., and Shen, H. "Processing Induced Warpage of Filament Wound Composite Cylindrical Shells," *Journal of Composite Material*, Accepted for Publication. Expected 2000
6. Meink, T., Huybrechts, S., Ganley, J. and Shen, H. "The Effect of Varying Thickness on the Buckling of Orthotropic Plates", *Journal of Composite Material*, Vol. 33, No. 11/1999
7. Meink, T, Shen, M. H. " Processing Induced Warpage in Composite Cylindrical Shells," *ASCE Advances in Composite Materials and Mechanics*, 1999.
8. Huybrechts, S., Meink, T., Wegner, P., Ganley, J., "Manufacturing Theory for Advanced Grid Stiffened Structures", Accepted to Composites - Part A: Applied Science and Manufacturing, December 1999.

### Conference Papers

#### Elastic Memory Composite Material: Their Performance And Possible Structural Applications

1. Lake, M., Naseem, A., Tupper, M., Meink, T., "Application of Elastic Memory Composite Materials to Deployable Space Structures", AIAA Space 2001 Conf and Exposition, August 2001.
2. Murphey, T., Meink, T., Mikulas, M. "Some Micromechanics Considerations of the Folding of Rigidizable Composite Materials," Structures, Structural Dynamics, and Materials Conference, April 2001.
3. Meink, T, Reinhardt, K, Luu K, Blankinship, R, Huybrechts, S, and Das, A, "PowerSail: A High Power Solution," *AIAA Space 2000 Conf. and Expo*, Long Beach, CA, September 2000.
4. George, T, M-H Shen, S. M. Huybrechts, T. E. Meink, and P. M. Wegner. "Optimal Design of Composite ChamberCore Structures" ASTM Composites Conference, August 2000.
5. Wegner, P.M, Ganley, J.M, Huybrechts, S.M, and Meink, T., "Advanced Grid Stiffened (AGS) Composite Payload Shroud for the OSP/Minotaur Launch Vehicle", IEEE Aerospace Conference, Big Sky MT, March 2000
6. Fosness, E., Sciuilli, D., Haskett, S., Meink, T., Maly, J., and Doggrell, L. "Secondary Payload Adapter for EELV," AIAA Space Technology Conference and Exposition, 1999
7. Meink, T., Shen, H-M., and Huybrechts. "Manufacturing Effects on Cure Consolidation in Filament Wound Composite Structures," 12<sup>th</sup> ICCM, July 1999. (Key Note Presentation)
8. Meink, T. E., and H.-M. Shen 1998, "Processing Induced Warpage in Composite Cylindrical Shells," *ASME International Mechanical Engineering Congress and Exposition*.
9. Huybrechts, S. and T. E. Meink. 1997. "Advanced Grid Stiffened Structures for the Next Generation of Launch Vehicles," *1997 IEEE Aerospace Conference Proceedings*.
10. Meink, T. E., and S. Huybrechts. 1996. "Hybrid Tooling For Advanced Grid Stiffened Structures," *1996 SAMPE Technical Conference Proceedings*.
11. Meink, T. E. 1995. *Structural Analysis and Design of Composite Isogrid Panels for Increased Buckling Efficiency*. Masters Thesis Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.

### Other Papers

1. Meink, T.E., and H.-M. Shen, "Warpage Prediction and Elimination in Filament Wound and Fiber Placed Composite Shells," Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1999.

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**Naval Research Lab Centennial**

**Dr. Troy Meink, principal deputy director of the NRO**  
**Thursday, Sept. 28, 2023**  
**Pentagon Courtyard, Arlington, Va.**

***AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY***

Good morning and thanks for inviting the NRO to be part of this momentous celebration. With 100 years of history, the Naval Research Lab has been advancing science and national security long before we were able to leverage space. Yet today's centennial offers an opportunity to talk about how the Lab's many innovations have helped the NRO use the vantage point of space to make America safer and stronger. I'm happy to share just a few of them with you today.

At the height of the Cold War, the Naval Research Lab helped usher in the space age. More than a year before the NRO was created in 1961, the Lab showed the feasibility of using space-based reconnaissance to track Soviet military activity. The space community often points to Corona as the first national reconnaissance satellite – that was a system jointly developed by the CIA and an industry team and launched by the Air Force on August 18, 1960. But it was really the Naval Research Laboratory that holds the distinction of being first. The Air Force launched an electronic intelligence, or ELINT, satellite called Galactic Radiation and Background, or GRAB, two months earlier. GRAB's mission was to obtain information on the capabilities and whereabouts of Soviet air defense radars – knowledge that was critical to assessing the likelihood of a nuclear counter-attack by Strategic Air Command bombers. GRAB exceeded expectations, even of the NRL engineers who built it. The Strategic Air Command was able to effectively map Soviet air defense radar coverage, which proved more extensive than previously believed. This caused the Command to reassess attack plans under the doctrine of massive retaliation.

GRAB was the first, but by no means the last, of space innovations achieved at NRL. In July 1962, when the NRO was in its infancy and still unacknowledged, it assimilated NRL's ELINT program into its multi-agency structure called NRO Program C. What made Program C different – groundbreaking technological advances were being developed by U.S. government personnel at a U.S. research facility, not by industrial base contractors working in commercial facilities in partnership with Government managers. Five months after Program C was established, NRL engineers launched a follow-up to GRAB, the much more advanced, two-satellite vehicle known as POPPY. Over the next nine years, the NRL would build, and the Air Force would launch, six more POPPY satellites. The intelligence this program collected supported a wide range of applications:

- 1) the characteristics and locations of air defense equipment, including new generations of surface-to-air missiles and interceptors;
- 2) ocean surveillance information that kept Navy operational commanders abreast of the modernization, expansion, and global projection of Soviet naval power;
- 3) a more coherent picture of the overall Soviet military threat, especially when combined with imagery data from other NRO satellites.

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I can tell you that this groundbreaking technology is still being applied today. The NRO's 21<sup>st</sup>-century SIGINT capabilities grew from the NRL innovations on the GRAB and POPPY programs.

If you've driven anywhere in the past 15 years without getting lost, you probably have GPS to thank. That's another space innovation to which NRL made enormous contributions. The technological advances and engineering expertise of the GRAB and POPPY programs led to the development of geolocation, specifically what became the Global Positioning System. GPS was developed in the same Government lab and owed much of its technical and intellectual DNA to those earlier successes. It took more than two decades to mature from conceptual to fully operational, and the program office built upon technologies and satellite geopositioning techniques discovered and honed by NRL, NRO, and the Aerospace Corporation, just to name a few.

Of these contributors, the NRO Program C connection to GPS's development is least well known. That story actually began when the Navy started developing a space-based system called Transit that allowed it to accurately locate Polaris submarines at sea. The first GRAB satellite was actually launched as a "piggyback payload" on the Transit 2A satellite. NRL concurrently began foundational work on a precise, all-weather, real-time, global navigation system. Two key NRL contributions to the GPS program were development of precision cesium and rubidium atomic clocks, which had to be improved 100 fold for use in satellites; and the use of refurbished Atlas F launch vehicles to boost the payloads into orbit.

At the forefront were two brilliant engineers, Roger L. Easton, considered by many to be the "Father of GPS," and Peter G. Wilhelm, a Pioneer of National Reconnaissance and technical director and lead engineer for 74 satellites over his 50-year career at NRL. In 1964, Easton began research and experiments to demonstrate his idea for instantaneous satellite navigation using passive ranging and a constellation of satellites containing high-precision atomic clocks and operating in a circular orbit. Easton called his system Timation, short for time-navigation. By 1967, he was ready to prove his concept through an initial satellite launch. Wilhelm—but not Easton—was actively working NRO satellites for Program C, and had developed the radio transmitters and receivers for GRAB. In the same year that Easton began his Timation work, NRL promoted Wilhelm to lead all of its satellite programs, including those being funded by the National Reconnaissance Program. So when the time came to launch the first two of Easton's Timation satellites, Timation-I on 31 May 1967, and Timation-II on 30 September 1969, Wilhelm arranged to have those satellites launched—as GRAB had been—in "piggyback" mode atop NRO satellites Poppy 5 and Poppy 6. These were the first demonstrations of what became the GPS navigation concept from space, the first of four experimental satellites that Easton had developed. Even after the Air Force, along with Aerospace, established a GPS program office in 1972, it was Easton's Navigation Technology Satellite-2), launched in 1977, that became the first GPS satellite.

The NRO came out of the shadows in 1992. Four years later, in 1996, the NRO acknowledged for the first time the launch of one of our satellites. Now, our launches are livestreamed on YouTube, but payload information remains largely classified. Today, I have the distinct honor of publicly announcing the declassification of the NRL's ELINT satellite program that succeeded POPPY – a program named PARCAE. The NRO launched the first satellite under the PARCAE program in 1976. The program continued until 1996 with the final launch of an improved version

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of the PARCAE satellite. As an electronic intelligence collection system, the PARCAE satellites collected information on the Soviet Union's naval fleet and other foreign entities. Flying in low-earth-orbits, the PARCAE satellites transmitted data to ground stations at selected locations around the world. This provided critical information that helped the U.S. and allied nations win the Cold War. PARCAE satellites continued to enhance U.S. national security through the war on terror, with the final PARCAE satellite operating until 2008.

GRAB, POPPY, GPS, and PARCAE are all examples of the core historical strengths and the important partnership between the NRO and NRL. It is a relationship defined by incredibly talented people, harnessing the most advanced technologies, to confront some of the nation's most daunting national security challenges. The NRO is proud to congratulate the Naval Research Lab on its century of service to the nation. For more than 60 of those 100 years, we have been proud to work together, assuring the United States remains at the forefront of innovation. We look forward to continue this partnership, developing the most advanced and capable space reconnaissance systems and working to ensure America's intelligence advantage.

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**Satellite 2024**

**Dr. Troy Meink, principal deputy director of the NRO  
Monday, March 18, 2024  
Washington Convention Center, Washington, D.C.**

***AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY***

Good morning and thanks for inviting me to join you here today and kick off this year's conference. I started my career in research and development at the Air Force Research Lab and technology is still my favorite part of the job. And with a few exceptions, I have worked R&D, technology transfer, and systems acquisition throughout my career.

This is one of the reasons I enjoy working at the NRO... you don't need to look hard to find a tech meeting. So I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about how technology is helping the National Reconnaissance Office deliver capabilities critical to our nation and our allies.

The NRO's mission is to use satellites and other space-based capabilities to secure and expand America's intelligence advantage... to keep our nation and our people safe. We are responsible for collecting and delivering critical information that can only be obtained from the vantage point of space. Millions of people count on us every day.

We provide geolocations and real-time situational awareness for our warfighters, and the data we collect and process helps the Intelligence Community provide solid assessments so policymakers can make informed decisions.

Civilian customers also count on our products for priorities like assessing damage from natural disasters, understanding climate change, and helping relief agencies determine how and where to deliver humanitarian aid.

The NRO has been at the forefront of innovation since its inception. It's critical to our national security that we stay there. We know we cannot stay on the cutting edge – building new technology and putting innovative ideas into practice – unless we can attract the brightest minds and the most innovative commercial partners to our team. And that's why I'm here today.

I started my presentation with a look at one of the recruiting videos that highlights the diverse careers and skill sets at the NRO. They're being broadcast on social media and streaming platforms. In just the first few months, they made 16 million impressions and had 76,000 clicks to nro.gov, and they contributed to a 38 percent increase in applications. That's not woodworking or gaming video numbers, but it's pretty good for a government video.

These videos are just one way the NRO is investing in recruiting and retaining a dynamic team – one that represents the diversity of our country and has the skills necessary to meet mission needs.

We are recruiting from private industry, we're recruiting out of the military, we're recruiting straight out of college, and we're recruiting out of academia.

Last year we held more than 60 recruitment events, including targeted outreach to HBCUs.

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We also have a robust student internship program that provides a pipeline of talent. It's shown remarkable growth already, as well as tremendous promise for the future.

Prior to 2020, the NRO really didn't have an intern program. Last summer, we welcomed 73 interns selected from a pool of 1,100 applicants – more than double the number of applications from the year before.

For this year's internship program, we received more than 3,300 applications, and we are already fielding applications for next summer. After they graduated, 34% of eligible former interns have returned to work for the NRO.

We also have multiple programs to send our current employees for advanced degrees, part-time and full-time. I got my graduate degrees through a similar program and that's how I got hooked on the national security mission.

We also implemented STEM pay in 2023 to offer higher levels of compensation for in-demand, mission-critical technical skills.

We know there's a competitive market for these skills, and talented people have a choice. So why choose the NRO?

We're doing challenging work, work where skilled individuals can make a difference. And as I've said a number of times, work that is important for the country. Once people get in the door of the NRO, they tend not to leave. And those who do leave often come back.

We have an experienced team – people who have been doing this work for a long time – and they are the world's experts. And the new people joining our workforce are bringing an impressive level of knowledge and ingenuity.

Now more than ever, that caliber of talent is critical.

There have been a number of times in our history when we have made revolutionary changes in how we go about doing things. The transition from film to digital imagery is one of them. And now we're in another.

Right now the NRO is developing the most capable, diverse, and resilient overhead ISR constellation the world has ever seen.

Over the next decade, we will increase the number of satellites currently on orbit, including both large and small satellites operating across multiple orbits. Expanding our overhead architecture will provide greater revisit rates, increased coverage, and more timely delivery of information. This will make our collection more agile, and eliminating single points of failure will make us more resilient.

Expanding our overhead architecture will allow us to collect an order of magnitude more data. This means ground operations must evolve as well. The NRO is developing tools and techniques to effectively manage and task the architecture so it can rapidly convert data to information. It's not the bits that matter, it's how the bits get organized into usable information that's important. Working with our Intelligence Community and DoD partners, we will deliver information that's more easily digested by humans. This will help ensure the right data is delivered to the right user at the right time, faster than ever before.

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These new architectures are enabled by a few key advances:

First, the cost of launch has come down dramatically. We have seen the cost for the larger rockets well under \$100 million, and less than \$10 million for the smaller, new entrant launch providers. Later this week we will launch on a Rocket Labs Electron out of Wallops Island. And we are confident the launch cost will continue to come down under the NSSL Phase 3 acquisition.

We have recently launched on previously flown boosters. We're taking advantage of different launch locations – Cape Canaveral in Florida and Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, and now Wallops Island in Virginia and even New Zealand. The more options that are available, the more the price comes down.

This significant reduction in cost to entry for launch has not only opened the market for new commercial space companies, but it has made new architecture approaches affordable to the government that were not affordable a decade ago.

Second, the performance of current digital technology, driven by the commercial market, has fundamentally changed the design space. That opens the door for architectures and capabilities that did not exist previously. A decade ago, the technology wasn't ready for the types of applications we needed. That's changed. We can now build an entire payload smaller than a power conditioning box from a decade ago.

And third, to take advantage of the first two, our approach to acquisition and risk management strategy has to change. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy or architecture approach, and physics gets a vote. There is continual debate about going fast and taking more risk. And I'm definitely on the "go fast and take more risk" side of the debate. But the devil's in the details. In the end, when the NRO is given a requirement, we have to meet that requirement. Period.

That has been interpreted as going slow and avoiding risk. Not so. At a very simplistic level, if we are only building one satellite every couple of years and it's pretty expensive, the satellite-to-satellite risk must be very low. However, if we are building multiple spacecraft per year and the cost per satellite is relatively low, we can take more satellite-to-satellite risk and still maintain a low system-level risk. The NRO is driving hard to do that in some programs today. Why not all programs? As I said before, physics gets a vote. And some physics, technology can't defeat.

Of course, we can't do this alone. We are combining efforts with other government agencies, other nations, academia, and the private sector to optimize our talents, tools, and effectiveness.

For example, the NRO and U.S. Space Force are partnering to shape the future of space-based Moving Target Indication, or MTI, systems. These will provide day, night, and all-weather detection and tracking of ground and maritime targets for the warfighter. We are also partnering with the Space Force on technology to enhance space domain awareness.

Commercial providers can be our most cost-effective means of meeting customer requirements, so we are fusing commercial and government ingenuity throughout our entire system.

Another way we are advancing our acquisitions and our commercial partnerships is through an innovative vehicle called Broad Agency Announcements, or BAAs. These are designed to accelerate and streamline development of emerging capabilities in the private sector. It's a flexible approach to acquisition that will allow us to evaluate, leverage, and integrate new and

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emerging phenomenologies like radar, hyperspectral, and radio frequency sensing. We will release multiple focus areas a year in order to accelerate our technical progress.

We also work with industry through the Director's Innovation Initiative, or DII. This offers a risk-tolerant environment to explore cutting-edge technologies and high-payoff concepts relevant to the NRO's mission. The DII gives us access to non-traditional developers doing groundbreaking research on advances like quantum technologies, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. Over the past 25 years, the DII has fielded thousands of proposals, and we've awarded funding to academia, small and large businesses, and government agencies.

The NRO is actively working to create more opportunities to engage new industry partners. We are expanding our outreach to small businesses, start-ups, and socially and economically disadvantaged business owners. We know that innovation can come from anywhere. If there's a good idea that can add capability, capacity, or speed to our systems, we want it.

Earlier I spoke about technology advances driving change into our architecture. But the changes are also being driven by the global threat environment.

The NRO was established in 1961 during a pivotal moment in history – the height of the Cold War. We were tasked with the most challenging national security problem of the time – collect intelligence on the Soviet Union's military forces and help prevent a nuclear war. This was the dawn of the space age, and our mission was to leverage space to enhance America's national security and intelligence advantage.

Today, we are once again at a pivotal moment in history. For the first time in decades, U.S. leadership in space and space technology is being challenged.

Our competitors are actively seeking ways to threaten our capabilities. They are posing unprecedented challenges and cutting into our lead. In particular, China and Russia are developing weapons and anti-satellite technology and becoming more aggressive with space weapons. They're developing weapons to destroy or interfere with our satellites – either kinetically or through directed energy from locations on the ground and in space. This includes both denial and deception, as well as cyber intrusions and cyberattacks that will be a perennial threat to all of our systems. As Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines noted during her Annual Threat Assessment released to Congress last week, China's commercial space sector is on pace to become a major global competitor by 2030.

To maintain our intelligence advantage, we need to increase our rate of change – we don't just need to innovate... we need to innovate faster than everyone else. And we will need to use all the talent the U.S. and our allies have to offer.

I appreciate your time today. Let's open the floor to a few questions.

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**2024 Space Symposium  
Dr. Troy Meink, NRO Principal Deputy Director  
April 9, 2024**

**INTRODUCTION**

Good morning and thanks for inviting me to join you here today.

It's great to be back at the Space Symposium, especially at a time when so much of our nation's attention has been on space. I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about how the National Reconnaissance Office is using satellites and other space-based capabilities to secure and expand America's intelligence advantage... to keep our nation and our people safe.

**RECRUITMENT**

I started my presentation with a look at one of the recruiting videos that highlights the diverse careers and skill sets at the NRO. They're being broadcast on social media and streaming platforms. In just the first few months, they reached more than 16 million people and contributed to a 38-percent increase in applications to jobs at the NRO. Those aren't YouTube numbers, but they are pretty good for a government video.

These videos are just one way the NRO is investing in recruiting and retaining a dynamic team – one that represents the diversity of our country and has the skills necessary to meet mission needs.

Right now, the NRO has the world's best space-based ISR capabilities. In order to stay that way, we need all the talent the U.S. and our allies can offer.

We are recruiting from private industry, we're recruiting out of the military, we're recruiting straight out of college, and we're recruiting out of academia.

We also have a robust student internship program that provides a pipeline of talent. It's shown remarkable growth already, as well as tremendous promise for the future. Until 2020, the NRO didn't really have an intern program at all. Last summer, the NRO welcomed 73 interns selected from a pool of 1,100 applicants – more than double the number of applications from the year before. For this year's program, we received more than 3,300 applications, and we are already fielding applications for next summer. So far, we have hired about 35% of our former interns.

We also have multiple programs to send our current employees for advanced degrees, either full- or part-time.

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We implemented STEM pay in 2023 to offer higher levels of compensation for in-demand, mission-critical technical skills. We know there's a competitive market for these skills, and talented people have a choice.

So why choose the NRO? We're doing challenging work, work where skilled individuals can make a difference, and work that is important for the country. Once people get in the door of the NRO, they tend not to leave. And those who do leave often come back.

We have an experienced team – people who have been doing this work for a long time – and they are the world's experts. And the new people joining our workforce are bringing an impressive level of knowledge and ingenuity.

#### **GLOBAL THREAT ENVIRONMENT**

Now more than ever, that caliber of talent is critical.

The NRO's job is collecting and delivering critical information that can only be obtained from the vantage point of space. Millions of people count on us every day.

Civilian customers depend on space collection to assess damage from natural disasters... predict climate change... and help relief agencies determine how and where to deliver humanitarian aid, to name just a few examples.

The Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community depend on NRO capabilities for national security. For example, we provide geolocations and real-time situational awareness for our warfighters, and high-resolution imagery helps analysts provide solid assessments so policymakers can make informed decisions.

NRO systems are often the only tools able to access hostile territory or rugged terrain, and we can collect critical information without risking human lives or infringing on other nations' territorial sovereignty. Space-based ISR has become "a" primary, if not "the" primary means of collection in denied areas.

Yet we are at a pivotal moment in history.

For the first time in decades, U.S. leadership in space and space technology is being challenged.

Our competitors are actively seeking ways to threaten our capabilities. They are posing unprecedented challenges and cutting into our lead. They are developing weapons to destroy or interfere with our satellites – either kinetically or through directed energy from locations on the ground and in space. This includes both denial and deception, as well as cyber intrusions and cyberattacks that will be a perennial threat to all of our systems.



And they're becoming more aggressive. As Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines noted during her Annual Threat Assessment released to Congress last month, China's commercial space sector is on pace to become a major global competitor by 2030.

To maintain our intelligence advantage, we need to increase our rate of change. We don't just need to innovate... we need to innovate faster than everyone else. Today I'll share with you a few ways the NRO is pushing the boundaries to ensure we stay on the leading edge of innovation.

#### **PROLIFERATION OF ARCHITECTURE**

Right now the NRO is developing a capable, diverse, and resilient overhead constellation.

Over the next decade, we will continue to increase the number of satellites operating across multiple orbits – not just large systems that are the traditional hallmark of the NRO, but also smaller, proliferated systems.

Expanding our overhead architecture will provide greater revisit rates, increased coverage, and more timely delivery of information. This will make our collection more agile, and eliminating single points of failure will make us more resilient.

Expanding our overhead architecture also allows us to collect an order of magnitude more data. This means ground operations must evolve as well. The NRO is developing tools and techniques to effectively manage and task the architecture so it can rapidly convert data to information. It's not the bits that matter, it's how the bits get organized into usable information that's important. Working with our Intelligence Community and DoD partners, we will deliver information that's more easily digested by humans. This will help ensure the right data is delivered to the right user at the right time, faster than ever before.

Later this morning, we are scheduled to launch NROL-70 from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. I invite you to stop by the NRO booth #1456 in the exhibit hall to watch a livestream of the launch, scheduled for 10:53 Mountain Time. This launch is important for two reasons – it marks the end of the Delta IV era and 15 years of the rocket's service to the NRO. And the NROL-70 mission puts into orbit a national security payload that will deliver critical space-based information to our nation's warfighters, intelligence analysts, and decision makers.

Next month, the first phase of our proliferated architecture is currently scheduled to launch as NROL-146. We've already launched a number of demonstrations over the last few years to verify cost and performance, but this will be the first launch of an



operational system. These systems will increase timeliness of access, diversify communications pathways, and enhance our resilience. Approximately half a dozen of these launches are planned for 2024, with additional launches expected through 2028. You'll hear more details about launch locations, dates, and times as they approach.

#### **KEY ADVANCES ENABLING NEW ARCHITECTURES**

The new, proliferated architecture is enabled by a few key advances:

First, the cost of launch is coming down dramatically. We have seen the cost for the larger rockets well under \$100 million; and for the smaller, new entrant launch providers, it's less than \$10 million. And we know that continuing to make the cost of launch more affordable is a priority of the National Security Space Launch Phase 3 acquisition.

We have recently launched on previously flown boosters, which also cuts down on cost. We're taking advantage of different launch locations – Cape Canaveral in Florida and Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, and now Wallops Island in Virginia and even New Zealand. The more options that are available, the more the price comes down.

The significant decline in cost to entry for launch has not only opened the market for new commercial space companies, but it has made new architecture approaches affordable to the government – ones that were not affordable just a decade ago.

Second, the performance of current digital technology, driven by the commercial market, has fundamentally changed the design space. It opens the door for architectures and capabilities that did not previously exist. A decade ago, the technology wasn't ready for the types of applications we needed. That's changed. For example, we can now build an entire payload smaller than a power conditioning box from a decade ago.

Another example is a first-of-its-kind experimental research demonstration of new mirror technology called Replicated Composite Optics, or RCO, that the NRO recently put on orbit. Compared to the traditional mirror technology, RCO is lighter, less expensive, and faster to produce.

The demo's primary mission is to test the performance and stability of the RCO mirror on orbit. That's because the space environment can impact the wavefront error of a composite mirror over time. The ability to manufacture mirrors that are lighter in weight could help increase the aperture of NRO's future systems, providing more persistent, higher resolution imagery.



And third, to take advantage of the first two, our approach to acquisitions and risk management is changing. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy... and physics gets a vote. There is continual debate about going fast and taking more risk. And I'm definitely on the "go fast and take more risk" side of the debate, but the devil's in the details. In the end, when the NRO is given a requirement, we have to meet that requirement... period.

This has been interpreted as going slow and avoiding risk – not so. At a very simplistic level, if we are only building one satellite every couple years and it's pretty expensive, the satellite-to-satellite risk must be very low. However, if we are building multiple spacecraft per year and the cost per satellite is relatively low, we can take more satellite-to-satellite risk and still maintain a low system-level risk. The NRO is driving hard to do that in some programs today. Why not all problems? As I said before, physics gets a vote. And some physics... technology just can't defeat.

#### **PARTNERSHIPS**

Of course, we can't do this alone. We are combining efforts with other government agencies, other nations, academia, and the private sector to optimize our talents, tools, and effectiveness.

Chief among these is our relationship with other elements within the DoD and IC. As a Defense agency and IC element, the NRO operates under both Title 10 and Title 50 authorities. We work for, are staffed from, and are funded by both the DoD and IC. We collect and process data to satisfy both national and military intelligence missions.

The NRO has a long history of providing direct support to the warfighting community, in partnership with the DoD and IC, and our next-generation systems will be increasingly relevant to this customer base. For example, we have been working with our DoD partners, including the U.S. Space Force, on the transition from air- to space-based Moving Target Indication, or MTI, systems.

These will provide day, night, and all-weather detection and tracking of ground and maritime targets for the warfighter. We are developing and acquiring the space and ground systems, integrating MTI into the broader enterprise. Our focus is on delivering information to our customers around the world, when and where they need it.

Commercial partners can be our most cost-effective means of meeting customer requirements, so we are fusing commercial and government ingenuity throughout our entire system. We are always looking for mechanisms to award contracts faster and more efficiently.



For example, an innovative contractual vehicle called Broad Agency Announcements, or BAAs are designed to accelerate and streamline development of emerging capabilities in the private sector. It's a flexible approach to acquisition that will allow us to evaluate, leverage, and integrate new and emerging phenomenologies like radar, hyperspectral, and radio frequency sensing. We are releasing multiple focus areas a year in order to accelerate our technical progress. Our commercial program office, or CSPO, is leading these efforts and more, particularly with commercial imagery.

The NRO is actively working to create more opportunities to engage new industry partners. We are expanding our outreach to small businesses, start-ups, and socially and economically disadvantaged business owners. We know that innovation can come from anywhere. If there's a good idea that can add capability, capacity, or speed to our systems, we want it.

#### **CLOSING**

I started my remarks talking about the NRO's recruitment efforts. We know that attracting the brightest minds to our team will keep us on the leading edge of innovation – building on the legacy the NRO began when it was created more than 60 years ago. Our history and our future are built on the talents of people who are committed to national security... and passionate about technology.

We at the NRO often say "we're building the future now." That's not just about our architecture. We are also investing in the talent of tomorrow – whether that's someone with a long-term passion for national security or technology, or a kid marveling at yesterday's eclipse who is newly excited about space. It's their curiosity, their dedication, and their ability to think big that will ensure the NRO continues to succeed in our mission of expanding our intelligence advantage and keeping America safe.

I said earlier that we are in a pivotal moment in history. The world is evolving rapidly. The global threat environment is changing, the technology we use is changing. All of it is moving very fast. So we need to move even faster. We will continue to innovate – to use the best technology, the best tools, and the best talent to move the NRO forward.

Thanks for your time today, and enjoy the rest of the symposium.



**Statement for the Record of Dr. Troy E. Meink  
Principal Deputy Director, National Reconnaissance Office**

**House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Strategic Forces  
Hearing on "Fiscal Year 2025 National Security Space Programs"  
Wednesday, May 1, 2024**

Chairman Lamborn, Ranking Member Moulton, and members of the subcommittee... it is a pleasure to appear before you today with my colleagues ... and to represent the people of the National Reconnaissance Office.

For more than 60 years, the NRO has been developing tools and techniques that advance our national security. Today we are building on that legacy of innovation to make the United States even safer and stronger. Space-based intelligence has become a primary, if not the primary, means of collection in denied areas.

This is especially critical as our competitors are seeking to deny our strategic intelligence advantage. With Congress's support, and with the continued innovation of the NRO's talented workforce and trusted partnerships, we will ensure America retains its strategic advantage in space.

Our FY25 budget request aims to keep the United States the world's leader in space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, or ISR. It prioritizes investment in a diverse and resilient constellation to meet the needs of all intelligence customers, including warfighters and allies.

We are committed to using taxpayer dollars effectively and efficiently. I'm proud to report that our commitment to fiscal accountability earned the NRO our 15th consecutive clean financial statement audit for Fiscal Year 2023.

Our effectiveness and efficiency are the result of the flexibility afforded to us under the authorities of both Title 10 and Title 50, as the NRO is a member of both the Defense Intelligence Enterprise and the Intelligence Community.

Our investments in tools and technology—both on the ground and on orbit—ensure our customers get the information they need, where they need it, faster than ever before. We enable real-time decision-making to protect the nation and our allies.

With the support of Congress, the NRO will continue to invest in government-engineered, industry-built satellites that are resilient by design; partnerships that allow us to maximize our impact, and developing the world's most advanced tools, information technology, and communications networks – allowing us to fuse critical data and deliver it to our customers anywhere on Earth.



Over the next decade, the NRO will continue to increase the number of satellites operating across multiple orbits – not just large, very capable, exquisite systems, but also smaller, proliferated systems.

Later this month, the first phase of our proliferated architecture is currently scheduled to launch as NROL-146. We've already launched a number of demonstrations over the last few years to verify cost and performance, but this will be the first launch of the operational system. These systems will increase timeliness of access, diversify communications pathways, and enhance our resilience.

For our ground systems and more exquisite on-orbit capabilities, we are strengthening our cyber defenses, eliminating single points of failure, and hardening our architecture. This will also enable systems to be more resilient.

The NRO has been at the forefront of innovation since our inception, and today that culture of innovation is as strong as ever.

Our highly skilled workforce of military and civilians brings diverse viewpoints and innovative ideas to solve complex intelligence challenges.

One example – we are using artificial intelligence and machine learning to manage capabilities within our constellations. This enables us to deliver data at speed and in the most efficient way possible to support both analysts and warfighters.

Partnerships are inherent in who we are. Our workforce is a blend of government civilians and members of every military service. As we evolve to meet changing mission needs, we look forward to continued collaboration on personnel support from our civilian and military partners.

We maximize our impact when we partner with our colleagues across the intelligence and defense communities to leverage every possible innovation and optimize our collective talents, tools, and effectiveness.

For example, our partnership with U.S. Space Force, and previously the Air Force, on launch procurement has provided assured access to space for NRO's systems for over 15 years. We are fully committed to Phase 3 of the National Security Space Launch Program. The U.S. Space Force has been a great partner in incorporating our needs into the contract with Lane 1 and Lane 2 options.

Our continued success depends on our ability to adapt and to innovate, and on Congress' continued support for our mission. New technology, new partnerships, and the talents of our workforce are critical to maintaining our competitive advantage and keeping America safe. On behalf of the entire NRO workforce, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering your questions.



Mitchell Institute's Schriever Spacepower Forum  
Dr. Troy Meink, principal deputy director of the NRO  
October 16, 2024

**AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY**

Good morning. Thank you, Charles. I appreciate the invitation to talk about the NRO.

For those who may not be entirely familiar with the NRO and what we do, I'd like to build on your introduction by saying that we have a long history of helping the US maintain its intelligence advantage.

We develop, acquire, launch and operate our nation's space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. This includes a constellation of satellites, and the ground capabilities used to manage them and process the data they collect.

We put these assets and capabilities to use for the security of our nation – to secure and expand the U.S. intelligence advantage – and, in a humanitarian context, to protect people and our planet.

The NRO's customers include...

The warfighter, who needs near-real-time assessments of adversary capabilities and intentions. And we have been providing near-real-time delivery of intelligence to the warfighting community since before the first Gulf War.

The policymaker, who wants real-time information about breaking world events to enhance geopolitical understanding and decision making.

The first responder and civilian agency, who needs to monitor and respond to high-impact events such as natural disasters and humanitarian crises, as well as climate change.

And international partners, who leverage our capabilities to help ensure the safety and security of their people.

Today, our mission is more challenging than ever – and it's being driven by a host of forces including technological advancement, the rapid pace of innovation, the evolving threats of our adversaries, and growing stakeholder demands.

These forces are coming together to create generational changes in how we understand and deploy new technologies... how we innovate... how we collaborate with other government agencies and with industry players... and how we attract and retain top talent.

I'd like to talk a bit about each.

When it comes to deploying new technologies, the NRO has been at the leading edge for years. As the technology and tools advance, so do the ways we apply them.



The advancement in digital electronics, for example, continues to drive the evolution and automation of our capabilities, while also giving us the flexibility and speed in spacecraft design and development. The challenge is aligning the technology with the space environment.

New manufacturing processes and technologies have enabled innovation and improvements in satellite design and production, lowered costs and increased speed.

Today, we're using advanced data/analytics, machine learning, and deep learning – both on the ground and in space – to support the entire range of tasking, collection, processing, exploitation, and dissemination.

We employ these new technologies to help us innovate in many areas, I'm going to talk to two today – proliferated architecture and data management.

First, there is no "one size fits all" approach to architecture or satellite design. And proliferation is one approach we are using.

Today, the NRO continues to build and fortify the largest government satellite constellation in history.

In fact, we're preparing to wrap-up an especially dynamic 18-month period in which, by the end of this year, approximately 12 missions will have launched, putting more than 100 payloads on orbit.

For the NRO proliferation is not aspirational; we are fielding operational systems now.

We are evolving the NRO's constellation from dozens of satellites to hundreds, making our collection capabilities more responsive and timely, while increasing our resilience.

As you can imagine, this growth in satellite capability has come with increasing volumes of data and tighter timelines for processing and fusion. Our customers want more data – delivered faster – to better understand what's happening.

This increasing data volume presents us with tremendous opportunities and also a host of challenges. Challenges having to do with fusing distinct observations, pattern recognition, and the need to tie it all together.

However, the NRO is not starting from scratch. We have been dealing with rapidly growing data volumes almost since our inception more than 60 years ago.

The difference is the new tools we have available to apply to this challenge. We're implementing various AI techniques and advanced computing environments to automate many of the repetitive human tasks associated with our work.



Such as fusing multiple sources of unstructured data, organizing and sharing it more quickly with analysts; giving our customers the information they need when they need it and with greater accuracy.

This has never been more important given the current threat environment.

Charles, as you mentioned, China and Russia continue to challenge our nation's space-based advantage. Each has developed and deployed counterspace capabilities that are designed to place U.S. satellites and ground capabilities at risk. These include on-orbit threats as well as cyber intrusions and cyberattacks.

It's obviously very concerning that Russia may be considering the incorporation of nuclear weapons into its counterspace programs.

At the same time, China is looking to deny our ability to operate in space by creating a heightened threat environment. They're building a proliferated architecture of their own – and they have the industrial capacity, talent, resources – and the will – to challenge our space supremacy.

This makes it essential that the NRO continue to modernize our nation's space-based ISR capabilities and supporting ground architecture – and explains why we're doing just that.

We know that innovation can come from anywhere. If there's a good idea that can add capability, capacity, resilience and speed to our systems we want it.

Which is why we're fusing commercial and governmental ingenuity, investing in commercial support of mission needs where it makes sense.

A vibrant, flourishing space-industrial base is in our nation's best interests. In fact, commercial partnerships have evolved to rank among the NRO's most effective means of meeting customer requirements and achieving mission objectives.

This is not new to the NRO; it's part of our cultural history that dates back to our inception more than 60 years ago.

What's different today is that the NRO is working with a broader set of industry partners than at any time in its history – large and small players across the defense, intelligence, and commercial space ecosystem. These relationships are deeper and more diverse than they have ever been.

We leverage the full extent of the industry base to support the NRO's mission.

We're working with industry to develop spacecraft and strengthen ground facilities. At the same time, we're working across government and with our international partners on other mission needs.



For example, we're teaming with the USSF on launch opportunities – and over the last several years have launched on five different rockets, from five different locations, across three continents.

As a sign of our commitment to commercial partnerships, we continue to enhance our internal processes to award contracts faster, and create more opportunities to engage new industry partners.

We're willing to go big on investments where it makes sense for mission success. Our Electro-Optical Commercial Layer acquisition a couple of years ago – at more than \$4 billion over 10 years – is one example.

That said, we've got to make ourselves even easier to do business with. And we do that by accelerating investment decisions where they make the most sense... and by adopting a wide variety of strategies for risk management.

And we have not just been focusing on commercial collaboration, but also across the government and with international partners.

The NRO sits at the intersection of Defense (Title 10) and Intelligence (Title 50).

We have always felt this gives us a unique lens through which to view our nation's challenges and opportunities. It also gives us an understanding of customer needs, be it the warfighter, the policymaker or the analyst. Further, it helps us to grasp how fusion on multiple phenomenologies is often needed to satisfy a requirement.

The data we collect and process supports both Title 10 and Title 50 customers; and even unique collects are intermixed moment to moment to satisfy customers across the board.

We have a long history of joining forces with other government agencies. In fact, collaboration is part of our organization's culture and critical to our success.

One of our most important relationships is with the U.S. Space Force. We're teaming with them to shape the future of the Ground Moving Target Indicators (GMTI) capability. I'm sure we'll talk a bit more about this during our time together.

The NRO has always supported the needs of the warfighter in an operational environment. What's new is the rate of change, increasing complexity and the expanding sets of information that need to be fused and delivered quickly.

We work across the whole of government to ensure the effective delivery of capabilities that serve all our customers. In the end, for the NRO, it's about the mission. Mission drives collaboration and teaming.

Of course, success is directly related to the NRO's talented workforce. This means ensuring that we're attracting and retaining a world class technical core. This is another foundational area where strong execution is a must for the NRO.

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[The nominee responded to Parts B-F of the Committee questionnaire. The text of the questionnaire is set forth in the Appendix to this volume. The nominee's answers to Parts B-F are contained in the Committee's executive files.]

**SIGNATURE AND DATE**

I hereby state that I have read and signed Parts A and B of the foregoing Senate Armed Services Committee Questionnaire, and that the information provided therein and in any document appended thereto, is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, current, accurate, and complete.



This 30th day of January 2025

[The nomination of Dr. Troy E. Meink was reported to the Senate by Chairman Wicker on April 8, 2025, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on May 13, 2025.]

[Prepared questions submitted to Mr. Michael P. Duffey by Chairman Wicker prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

**QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES****DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS**

*Question.* Section 133b of title 10, United States Code, describes the duties and powers of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)).

In your opinion, what are the most important roles of the USD(A&S) in supporting the missions of the Department of Defense (DOD)?

*Answer.* The USD(A&S) is the Principal Staff Assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense for all matters relating to acquisition and sustainment in the Department of Defense, with responsibility for delivering integrated capabilities to our warfighters quickly and at scale. This requires that the USD(A&S) maintain effective oversight of the full DOD acquisition and sustainment enterprise while establishing appropriate policies and processes to drive innovation and production at scale; foster a robust defense industrial base; sustain and modernize our weapons systems over their full life cycles; build a resilient logistics and mission support enterprise; empower the acquisition and sustainment workforce to increase cost efficiency and reduce delivery timelines; and ensure Service members and their families have safe and functional places to live and work.

*Question.* Civilian oversight of the acquisition system was a key recommendation of the Packard Commission and with Goldwater-Nichols Act. What are your personal views on the principle of civilian control of the defense acquisition system?

*Answer.* I support the provisions included in the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which provides a clear and streamlined chain of command between the Defense Acquisition Executive and Military Service Acquisition Executives for effective oversight of the Defense Acquisition System. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Service Acquisition Executives to reinforce these principles.

*Question.* Do you believe the USD(A&S) has been provided appropriate authority over the DOD acquisition and sustainment enterprise?

*Answer.* Based on my current understanding, I believe the USD(A&S) has the appropriate authority over the DOD acquisition and sustainment enterprise. If confirmed, I will work to further review these authorities and, if necessary, identify any potential changes for consideration.

*Question.* What changes, if any, would you recommend to section 133b of title 10, United States Code?

Answer. I do not have any specific recommendations at this time. If confirmed, I will work to further review these provisions and, if necessary, identify any potential changes for consideration.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you plan to assess the organizational structure, workforce, authorities, and availability of resources to ensure that the Office of the USD(A&S) is able to effectively execute its mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with leadership across the Department and my staff to assess how effectively A&S's organizational structure, workforce, and resourcing are aligned to the needs of our warfighters given the current operational environment and, if necessary, identify any potential changes for consideration.

*Question.* If confirmed, what duties and responsibilities would you assign to the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (DUSD (A&S))?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prescribe duties to the DUSD(A&S) in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 137a(b). Close partnership with the DUSD is critical to maintain effective oversight of and accountability for the full A&S portfolio, and I will work closely with the DUSD to set the conditions required to deliver and sustain capabilities to our warfighters quickly at scale.

*Question.* If confirmed, what duties and responsibilities would you assign to the Assistant Secretaries and other officials (e.g., Executive Director for Business Operations and Special Programs) who will report to you or the DUSD (A&S)?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prescribe duties to the Assistant Secretaries and other direct reports within A&S in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 138(b), the A&S charter, and their individual organizations' charters. In conjunction with the DUSD, I will work closely with each to maintain effective oversight of and accountability for their respective portfolios. I will set the conditions required for them to apply their management and subject matter expertise to support our warfighters across the breadth and depth of the full A&S portfolio.

*Question.* If confirmed, you would be responsible for managing the defense acquisition system. Section 133b of title 10, United States Code, requires the USD(A&S) to have "an extensive system development, engineering, production, or management background and experience with managing complex programs."

What background and experience do you have that qualify you for this position?

Answer. I have more than two decades of experience in the national security and technology communities, including nearly 15 years in the Department of Defense. I have previously served as Deputy Chief of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, Chief of Staff to the Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, and conducted multiple tours of duty in the former Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology. Having also served in the Office of Management and Budget, I have a unique combination of perspectives that contribute to enhancing the Department's ability to deliver capability to the warfighter quickly at scale. If confirmed, I will apply these experiences to bring a holistic approach to increasing the effectiveness of the defense acquisition system and enhancing the Department's efficiency across the full acquisition and sustainment enterprise.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you leverage the skills and knowledge gained through your prior experiences to carry out the duties of the USD(A&S)?

Answer. The duties of USD (A&S) require a combination of programmatic, financial, and organizational management experience at an enterprise level. If confirmed, I will directly apply my experience in these areas to the duties of the USD(A&S) position by engaging directly and deeply with the staff on matters facing the Department to quickly work through the range of potential pathways to overcome challenges, build a roadmap for thorough implementation, and oversee successful execution to accomplish the mission.

#### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

*Question.* Federal ethics laws, to include 18 U.S.C. § 208, prohibit government employees from participating in matters where they, or certain family members or organizations with which they have certain relationships, have a financial interest.

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

Answer. Yes.

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

Answer. I will comply with all recusal requirements under 18 U.S.C. § 208.

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

Answer. Yes.

#### PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

*Question.* If confirmed, what are the top priorities you would plan to focus on during your tenure as the USD(A&S)? What would be your plans for achieving these priorities?

Answer. If confirmed as USD(A&S), my top priorities I plan to focus on during my tenure as the USD(A&S) will be to:

1. Rebuild our military into a fighting force that will deter and, if necessary, decisively defeat our adversaries
2. Rapidly accelerate delivery of capability that provides dominant military superiority to our warfighter
3. Align requirements, budgeting, and acquisition across the enterprise to ensure we are focused on funding, buying, and building the weapon systems needed most to achieve our national security objectives and protect US interests
4. Modernize and streamline the defense acquisition system to empower our workforce, improve the quality and speed of our internal decisionmaking, and attract increased private capital investment and new entrants to maximize competition, quality, and affordability in the defense industrial base
5. Revitalize and reindustrialize our defense industrial base and repatriate our supply chains to provide resilience and deliver domestically sourced systems and components to provide our military with decisive advantage to deter and prevail in future conflict

Implementing these priorities will require rapid action to implement quick win opportunities that create momentum and build a culture that prioritizes accountability, urgency, and performance. If confirmed, I intend to immediately assess the current State of the USD(A&S) organization and our integration with the broader DOD, the health and performance of major defense acquisition programs, and the State of the defense industrial base. Throughout this initial review, I intend to refine these priorities based on the findings of the review and conversations with stakeholders, and build and execute a roadmap for rapid implementation of priority initiatives in partnership with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering, the Military Department leadership, and the Congress.

*Question.* In your opinion, what are the greatest challenges facing the DOD's acquisition and sustainment communities?

Answer. The DOD's acquisition and sustainment communities face considerable challenges in executing the mission to ensure our military is equipped with the force structure and combat support services required to assure mission success. Our acquisition and sustainment workforce consists of dedicated, patriotic professionals who are committed to achieving this mission with dedication and skill every day. However, aligning the incentives and balancing the diverse perspectives and priorities of stakeholders across such a broad enterprise that includes OUSD(A&S), the broader Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, the defense industrial base, and international allies and partners, presents a difficult challenge to the Department and the leadership responsible for delivering results.

Additionally, the acquisition and sustainment (A&S) communities continually face pressing challenges to balance competing priorities to optimize acquisition decisions and execution, including minimizing the speed and cost of delivery while ensuring required system performance and staying current with emerging technological innovation. A&S must also work to effectively manage the healthy tension in its relationship with industry, demanding performance and enforcing accountability while working to streamline regulations, incentivize innovation, and attract new companies to maintain a robust, competitive industrial base that rapidly delivers high performance systems within budgeted cost and schedule. A&S can only overcome these challenges with strong leadership, a culture that prioritizes urgency, performance, accountability, and results, as well as a maintaining and improving dedicated, capable, motivated, and stable workforce of acquisition professionals within government and industry.

*Question.* What would be your plans for addressing these challenges, if confirmed?

Answer. Overcoming these challenges will require leadership and an unrelenting effort to create and maintain the alignment and unity of effort to accelerate our acquisition and sustainment of capability that is responsive to the needs of the warfighter while balancing speed, affordability, and performance. In order to over-

come these challenges and keep pace with our adversaries in delivering cutting-edge technology quickly and affordably, adapting to rapid technological change, maintaining a healthy, diverse, competitive, and innovative industrial base, ensuring a resilient and secure supply chain, and maintaining and improving a 21st century workforce, if confirmed I intend to focus on building a culture that values urgency, speed, and performance while prioritizing results. This will require a commitment to open and frequent communication with the workforce, regular and robust engagement with internal and external stakeholders, and empowerment of the workforce with the necessary flexibility, authority, and resources, enforcement of accountability.

In addition to creating and maintaining a workplace culture focused on performance and results, if confirmed I intend to drive implementation of key initiatives that will keep our acquisition and sustainment system at the cutting edge of 21st century management practices that drive performance, including implementation of ongoing initiatives such as capability portfolio management, the adaptive acquisition framework, modular open system architectures, other transaction authority contracting, and acquisition workforce development. In addition, if confirmed, I intend to prioritize initiatives that will align, streamline, and modernize the requirements, budget, and acquisition, accelerate modernization, digitization, and streamlining of the acquisition process, and revitalize the defense industrial base.

*Question.* By what metrics will you measure your progress toward achieving these priorities and addressing these challenges?

*Answer.* Effective data collection, measurement, and analytics are absolutely essential to aligning an enterprise with the size and impact of the defense acquisition and sustainment system and ensuring the necessary focus on the results that the Secretary, the President, the Congress, and the American people demand from the Department. If confirmed, I intend to focus on ensuring our acquisition and sustainment system dramatically improves our data collection, analytics, and measurement capability and aligns with the cutting edge of 21st century corporate management best practices, measuring the performance of the overall system and individual components to continually assess and respond to dynamic conditions and optimize the allocation and application of resources to most effectively deliver results.

The prioritization of data-driven oversight and decisionmaking will enable more robust awareness of system performance in delivering results and the effectiveness of reforms while enabling a focus on maximizing positive change in metrics such as the US comparative advantage in military technological advantage, speed and efficiency of acquisition program delivery, program affordability and cost growth, current and projected system inventory and readiness levels, industrial base health and competitiveness, domestic production capacity and procurement rates within critical defense product lines, private sector investment in innovation and production, supply chain resilience and security, and workforce performance, skills, satisfaction, and retention. In addition to monitoring these outcome-based metrics, if confirmed, I intend to prioritize monitoring and maximizing the effectiveness of our data collection, analysis, and value to continually improve A&S decisions and execution.

*Question.* How do you propose to enforce accountability for acquisition decisions and processes under your purview, both for yourself and for those in your chain of command?

*Answer.* Accountability and transparency are essential to maintaining alignment and a focus on delivering the most impactful results across the enterprise. If confirmed I would establish and reinforce clear lines of authority and responsibility so that the Program Managers and Program Executive Officers on the front lines of acquiring capability for the warfighter are empowered with the authority to make decisions, the resources to execute, the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, and the accountability to deliver results. This includes a clear definition of authorities, responsibilities, and expectations throughout the acquisition lifecycle.

If confirmed, I would also ensure there is a clear chain of command for all acquisition programs, with well-defined escalation paths for addressing issues and making key decisions. This includes access to leadership to quickly resolve issues and move forward with deliberate action. If confirmed, I would work to enhance transparency and increase data-driven decisionmaking by modernizing the acquisition enterprise, digitizing the practice of acquisition, and continually measuring and managing through data-driven insights into program execution against key performance indicators (KPIs) like schedule, cost, and performance goals.

If confirmed, I will also seek to leverage data analytics by implementing advanced data analytic tools and artificial intelligence to identify trends, assess risks, inform decisionmaking throughout the acquisition lifecycle, strengthen performance management, and align incentives while tying program performance to personnel evaluations and prioritizing results over effort. By linking program manager and acqui-

sition workforce performance evaluations to program outcomes, we can reward success and address underperformance.

If confirmed, I would also work with the Military Departments and acquisition program leadership to structure contracts with industry partners to incentivize on-time delivery, cost controls, and delivery to performance specifications, with an intent to recognize and reward excellence from individuals and teams that demonstrate exceptional performance in acquisition program management. The Department must ensure there are appropriate consequences for poor performance, focusing on implementing corrective action plans for programs experiencing significant schedule delays, cost overruns, or performance shortfalls, re-baselining or terminating failing programs, and holding individuals accountable for poor performance or misconduct through appropriate administrative and disciplinary actions.

#### KEY RELATIONSHIPS

*Question.* Recent National Defense Authorization Acts have directed significant changes to the assignment of responsibilities within the defense acquisition system. For example, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 split the former Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) into the USD(A&S) and the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (USD(R&E)).

In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of having two separate organizations: one to manage acquisition and sustainment, and one to manage research and engineering?

*Answer.* With two Principal Staff Assistants in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, one primarily focused on Acquisition & Sustainment and the other focused on Research & Engineering, the Department benefits from a sharper focus and increased expertise within each respective portfolio, allowing USD(A&S) to focus time, resources, and attention on the complex processes of acquiring and sustaining weapon systems and ensuring programs are delivered on time and within budget to meet our warfighter's most pressing needs. It also allows USD(R&E) to concentrate efforts on long-term technological superiority, fostering innovation, and working in partnership with USD(A&S) to transition cutting-edge technologies from the lab to the battlefield.

Two separate offices also allow a tailored approach to developing the strategies and policies that are specific to the unique challenges of each area, such as streamlining acquisition processes for A&S and fostering innovation ecosystems for R&E. This construct also elevates the importance of R&E by creating a dedicated voice for science and technology at the highest levels of the DOD, emphasizing the critical role of innovation in maintaining military advantage.

These benefits must overcome some disadvantages, including the potential for silos and coordination challenges limiting communication and collaboration and hindering the smooth transition of technologies from R&E to A&S. There is also risk of duplication from overlapping responsibilities, the competition for limited resources, and the additional growth of layers of bureaucracy that complicates decisionmaking processes if it is not managed effectively.

The success of this organizational structure depends heavily on effective communication, collaboration, and leadership, including the establishment of strong communication channels and the fostering of joint initiatives between USD(A&S) and USD(R&E) to ensure seamless transition of technologies and alignment of priorities. USD(A&S) and USD(R&E) can explore opportunities to develop joint strategic plans and technology roadmaps that bridge the gap between R&E and A&S, fostering a lifecycle approach to capability development, and measuring success with shared metrics and performance goals that incentivize collaboration and hold both organizations accountable for successful technology transition and fielding.

*Question.* If confirmed as the USD(A&S), how would you envision your relationship with the USD(R&E)?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I intend to work collaboratively with USD(R&E), building upon our shared commitment to delivering decisive technological advantage to the warfighter. Through regular and frequent communication and coordination on the implementation of strategic priorities, I will seek to promote a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing both R&E and A&S, breaking down potential silos and fostering a culture of collaboration. Where applicable, I would seek to establish joint performance metrics that incentivize collaboration and hold both organizations accountable for successful technology transition and fielding, including the conduct of joint program reviews of key technology development efforts to assess progress, identify risks, ensure alignment on goals and objectives, and publicly recognize and reward joint successes in technology development and transition.

*Question.* DOD continues to struggle with the transition of new technologies into existing programs of record. The USD(R&E) enterprise has primary responsibility for development of new advanced technologies, but the Acquisition and Sustainment enterprise must also do its part to address transition of technology development programs into procurement and fielding.

What impediments to technology transition do you see within the Department?

*Answer.* Technology transition is a critical capability that the Department has struggled to effectively implement in recent years. The problem is magnified by a recent surge in innovative technology solutions emerging from commercial, non-traditional, and new defense industrial base vendors. The Department must work to tackle the challenges that hamper the rapid transition of emerging technology into production and delivery to the warfighter.

Among those challenges, the Department's labs and technologists are often incentivized to prioritize groundbreaking research and technological advancements, sometimes at the expense of practical considerations like manufacturability, affordability, and integration with existing systems. The acquisition enterprise, intentionally focused on delivering proven capabilities within cost and schedule constraints, can be risk-averse to adopting new and unproven technologies, particularly if they require significant modifications to existing programs.

As separate organizations, R&E and A&S are also at risk of operating in separate silos, with decreased communication and collaboration during the early stages of technology development. Given the expertise each organization provides, it is crucial to prioritize collaboration across the lifecycle of developing and acquiring capability to address manufacturability, sustainment, and integration challenges that can lead to costly redesigns and delays, while ensuring that new technologies that often struggle to secure funding within existing program budgets can compete for resources. The DOD's acquisition regulations and test and evaluation processes, while intended to ensure accountability, can be complex and time-consuming, hindering the rapid fielding of new technologies.

Finally, the DOD lacks a cohesive, department-wide strategy for technology transition, leading to inconsistent approaches and missed opportunities across different service branches and agencies. Dedicated funding for technology transition efforts must be prioritized to bridge the "valley of death" between R&D and procurement.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to increase the rate and frequency at which proven technologies developed by DOD, defense industry, or the commercial sector are transitioned into programs of record?

*Answer.* If confirmed, it would be among my highest priorities to increase the rate and frequency at which proven technologies developed by DOD, the defense industry, or the commercial sector are transitioned into programs of record. If confirmed, I would work to collaborate with the joint staff to assess and reform the requirements process to ensure we are striking the right balance between adequately communicating the needs of the Department and the warfighter for technology to maintain dominance on the battlefield while preserving the flexibility for creative engineers, technologies, and executives in industry to innovate and deliver timely, cost effective, and high performance solutions.

Additionally, if confirmed, I would seek to work with R&E to assess the inventory of available technology, identify quick win opportunities to promote adoption and transition of promising emerging technology, and develop an improved pathway within the Department to ensure that emerging technologies are identified and available without delay. If confirmed, I would look to partner with R&E and DIU to assess emerging technology and proposed commercial solutions for their readiness and availability to improve the warfighter's battlefield advantage, including the technology maturity, manufacturability, reproducibility, integration risk, maintainability, cost, and other factors that enable the Department to introduce new technology into the complex ecosystem of sophisticated systems to enhance lethality, tracking, communications, and other capabilities essential to success on the battlefield.

If confirmed, I would also work to shift the culture within the A&S enterprise to be more accepting of calculated risks associated with adopting new technologies and recognize that not every transition will be successful, but the potential benefits of experimentation and lessons learned from failure outweigh the costs of excessive risk aversion. By developing incentive structures that reward program managers and acquisition professionals for successfully integrating new technologies into existing programs or creating new pathways for rapid fielding, we can promote greater risk tolerance to accelerate learning and delivery.

Finally, we must develop and track key metrics to measure the success of technology transition efforts, such as the time it takes to field new capabilities, the number of technologies successfully integrated into programs of record, and cost savings

achieved through technology adoption. By regularly assessing the effectiveness of technology transition processes and making adjustments as needed, we can more quickly identify the delays in the process and more effectively accelerate transition emerging technology into fielded capabilities.

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF ACQUISITION REFORMS

*Question.* Congress has authorized a range of authorities to tailor the acquisition process to enable the rapid delivery of new capabilities including the Middle Tier of Acquisition (MTA), rapid acquisition authority, and the software acquisition pathway.

In your view, what benefit has the Department derived from its utilization of Middle Tier of Acquisition?

*Answer.* It is my understanding the Middle Tier of Acquisition (MTA) is designed to streamline the acquisition process for those programs that fit under that pathway. From my perspective, MTAs have allowed the DOD to deliver critical capabilities to warfighters faster than traditional acquisition approaches by employing rapid prototyping, experimentation, and fielding of systems in shorter timeframes. MTAs have also enabled DOD to be more responsive to evolving threats with increased flexibility to adapt requirements and incorporate new technologies as they emerge. If confirmed, I would seek ways to maximize use of this pathway and incorporate best practices and lessons learned to accelerate other acquisition pathways.

*Question.* In your view, what benefit has the Department derived from its utilization of the rapid acquisition authority?

*Answer.* In my view, the U.S. warfighter has benefited from the use of Rapid Acquisition Authority (RAA) and the Urgent Capability Acquisition (UCA) pathway. Both tools enable the Department to rapidly address urgent operational needs and respond to emerging threats. If confirmed, I will look to leverage all the tools at my disposal, like RAA and UCA, to ensure our warfighters are getting the best capabilities at speed and scale.

*Question.* In your view, what benefit has the Department derived from its utilization of the software acquisition pathway?

*Answer.* I believe a key benefit of the Software Pathway's rapid innovation cycles and capabilities has been more streamlined acquisition processes and increased Warfighter engagement within the development and evaluation of products. If confirmed, I will work across the Department to ensure its continued use to rapidly deliver capabilities to outpace evolving threats.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you ensure that rapid acquisition pathways are not inundated with unnecessary or unwarranted bureaucratic processes?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will assess whether the acquisition workforce is fully leveraging the flexible pathways available in the Adaptive Acquisition Framework to maximize speed, deliver capabilities to the warfighter at an accelerated pace, and apply lessons learned where this has been successful. It is my understanding that, except to the extent mandated by statute, the rulesets under each of the acquisition pathways are matters of policy established by the USD(A&S). If confirmed, I will remain vigilant and seek to ensure that any policy-rooted additions are thoroughly scrutinized and fully vetted by stakeholders before they are made.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you seek to balance the need to rapidly acquire and field innovative systems while ensuring acquisition programs stay on budget and schedule?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering and the Military Departments' Service Acquisition Executives to ensure the necessary policies are in place. It is my understanding that the Department has several initiatives and programs to facilitate rapid fielding and innovation and, if confirmed, I would seek to leverage and build upon these initiatives where practicable. It is also my understanding that several defense acquisition programs are delayed and over budget and, if confirmed, I will conduct a thorough review of any such programs. Finally, I appreciate that some cost growth and schedule delays are a function of optimistic planning at program inception and unrealistic expectations of industry. If confirmed, I will seek to ensure that disciplined and thoroughly informed baselines are established in the first instance in cooperation with the SAEs.

*Question.* In your view, has the Department successfully adopted the flexibilities provided in the Adaptive Acquisition Framework? If not, what would you do to improve the adoption of the flexible authorities to bring innovation into the Department?

*Answer.* The Adaptive Acquisition Framework is a flexible set of acquisition pathways for effective, suitable, survivable, sustainable, and affordable solutions to de-

liver advanced capabilities to the end user in a timely manner. Yet our holistic acquisition system, including the requirements process and resourcing process, is not fast or agile enough to provide our men and women in uniform with the most advanced equipment available on time and under budget. If confirmed, I will work with my staff and the Service Acquisition Executives to leverage the flexible authorities granted by Congress to maximize the use of competition, disciplined requirements, and the innovation of non-traditional vendors to accelerate fielding of advanced capabilities. I will also work with the Joint Staff, Services, DIU, Comptroller and CAPE to leverage opportunities to rapidly pursue acquisition programs and ensure we properly resource those programs once we commit to them.

*Question.* In your view, are there any congressionally mandated or Department-driven reforms that you would recommend be modified or suspended? If so, why?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the suite of authorities set forth in statute and will seek to address any identified shortfalls through the legislative proposal process.

*Question.* In your view, of the congressionally mandated or Department-driven reforms, which specifically have been the most successful and impactful acquisition reform initiatives of the past decade?

*Answer.* Other Transaction Authority has provided a key tool for adopting new business models and working with non-traditional providers. Similarly, the Middle Tier of Acquisition pathway has also provided flexibility to move faster to acquire operational capabilities. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the additional impacts, positive and negative, that these and other reforms have had on the Defense Acquisition System. If confirmed, I will work with my staff to develop a data-driven understanding of the impact of the changes in the last few years, and more importantly, identify where we must do more or make changes to improve outcomes.

#### SOFTWARE AND IT ACQUISITION

*Question.* Software has become one of the most critical components of DOD systems, but recent studies by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Defense Innovation Board, and the Defense Science Board, among others, show the Department's software development practices have not kept up with leading industry practices. While DOD has taken significant steps in the last few years, such as establishing a software acquisition pathway emphasizing rapid delivery and user engagement, programs have yet to consistently incorporate leading software development practices.

What do you believe are the major barriers to DOD fully adopting modern software development approaches, and what additional steps, if confirmed, would you take to drive their adoption throughout DOD?

*Answer.* I believe the Department has made considerable progress in adopting modern software practices in recent years, but we must accelerate the scaling and transformation of our workforce, processes, tools, and culture. Secretary Hegseth's recently issued memorandum addressing the Software Acquisition Pathway for instance, works to initiate a cultural change in how we do business, directly addressing the use of rapid acquisition authorities for software programs. If confirmed, I will work across the Department and Services to build on our early foundations and further optimize rapid software delivery through the modernization of our enterprise processes, strategies, and culture in line with Secretary Hegseth's guidance. If confirmed, I will also ensure the Department has the needed workforce, training, resources, and guidance at all levels, such as a Software Cadre, to accelerate our cultural shift to modern software practices into our programs, policies, and processes.

*Question.* What changes would you recommend to the Software Acquisition pathway, if any?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the Department has been proactive in making improvements to the Software Acquisition Pathway since its inception in October 2020 and has been working across the Department to improve its enterprise processes for requirements, testing, costing, and interoperability to support the accelerated delivery timelines required by the Software Pathway. For example, the recently signed new guidance adds opportunities for Defense Business Systems to use the Software Pathway's streamlined modern practices. If confirmed, I will work across the Department to optimize our enterprise processes, ensure we have the resources to scale wider adoption of this pathway, and implement Secretary Hegseth's direction for acquiring software components of weapons and business systems.

*Question.* What recommendations do you have to improve the understanding and competency of software development and IT skills in the workforce to help government decisionmakers be better informed consumers of such capabilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department has the needed workforce, training, resources, and guidance at all levels to accelerate our cultural shift to adopt modern software acquisition and development practices into our programs, policies, and processes. In an era of software-defined warfare, I believe it is critical to have a workforce with the expertise to implement commercial best practices, rapid innovation, and streamlined acquisition.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the role of DOD software factories?

Answer. It is my understanding that the Department continues to improve its software production capabilities and to establish digital development pipelines and platforms that can accelerate delivery of capabilities to the warfighter. If confirmed, I will work across the Department to enable programs with the enterprise tools and processes it needs to support more rapid and secure digital product delivery.

*Question.* Do you believe that consumption-based solutions, also called software-as-a-service, is a contracting methodology that should be more widely adopted by DOD? If so, what steps would you recommend to encourage the use of consumption-based solutions?

Answer. It is my understanding that Software-as-a-Service is growing within Defense Business Systems, and I believe the Department must continue to team with industry to expand the availability of these platforms and services to address military unique challenges. If confirmed, I will continue to both enable and encourage consumption-based solutions and commercial solutions to update and upgrade our IT infrastructure.

#### ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

*Question.* The rapid pace at which our adversaries are fielding technological advancements demands the Department establish an acquisition system that can deliver capabilities that are responsive to new threats and emerging technological opportunities.

In your view, do the current policies and practices of the defense acquisition system sufficiently encourage and support the adoption of disruptive technologies in the Department's acquisition programs? If not, what changes would you recommend in support of these initiatives?

Answer. I believe that the Department has the right policies and practices in place to adopt disruptive technologies, and while some modifications may improve the process, the larger challenge we face is that the acquisition workforce does not make sufficient use of the new agile approaches the Department has developed through the Adaptive Acquisition Framework. I also believe that the Department needs to better incentivize its acquisition workforce to take risks. If confirmed, I will work with my team in A&S, as well as the Service Acquisition Executives to assess the effectiveness of the current system and how well it is utilized.

*Question.* What do you see as the balance when making tradeoff decisions regarding whether to pursue more deliberative major capability acquisition pathways versus rapid acquisition processes?

Answer. I believe that the type of capability the Department is acquiring should drive the means it uses to acquire that capability. Where the Department is willing to take more risk, we should prioritize the use of accelerated approaches, and when acquiring larger, more complex capabilities, a more deliberate process will ensure we are correctly managing risk to develop the capability. If confirmed, I intend to ensure that where more rapid, iterative processes can be applied, the Department will ensure maximized use of rapid pathways.

*Question.* What do you view as the major barriers to entry for new companies that want to do business with DOD? How would you address these barriers, if confirmed?

Answer. New companies face significant hurdles when attempting to work with the DOD. Inconsistent demand signals, bureaucratic red tape, and a slow acquisition process discourage new companies from navigating the complexities of DOD contracts. Addressing these barriers requires a multi-pronged approach. This includes streamlining the acquisition and budgeting processes to provide clearer demand signals and proactive engagement with smaller, lesser-known companies to demonstrate that the DOD values their innovation and is committed to expanding the industrial base. By taking these steps, the DOD can attract fresh talent and ideas, ultimately bolstering its technological edge and improving national security.

*Question.* What do you see as the impediments for program managers to quickly transition new technologies? What changes would you suggest to the program manager and program executive officer authorities?

Answer. I believe that program management is primarily about managing risk in delivering a critical capability to the warfighter while balancing cost, schedule, and performance. Driving disruption into the system, where a disruption orientation

makes sense, will require better incentives in the Department to enable a culture that takes more risk and provides greater flexibility and authority to program managers with responsibility to deliver results. If confirmed, I will work with my team and the Service Acquisition Executives to improve our ability, and willingness, to take risks in the system.

*Question.* What recommendations do you have for implementing portfolio management in defense acquisition, if any?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the Department has made progress toward implementing portfolio management, including the release of a Directive that mandates the use of data-driven and mission-focused analysis and cross-Department reviews to better inform decisions within and across portfolios and programs. That said, I believe that the Department must go further to establish, refine, and integrate disciplined decisionmaking processes across all aspects of defense acquisition, including how it programs resources, sets requirements, and makes acquisition decisions. If confirmed, I will work with the key stakeholders across the Department, to include the Joint Staff, Comptroller, CAPE, R&E, DIU, and the Military Services to enable portfolio management and improve the Department's acquisition decisions.

*Question.* What is your understanding of DOD's Capability Advantage Pathfinders (CAPs), and in your view, are there any lessons that may be learned in improving cross-portfolio capability development?

*Answer.* It is understanding that the Department is utilizing the CAP effort to develop innovative approaches to acquisitions utilizing current authorities. If confirmed, I will familiarize myself with the CAP initiatives and work to implement any critical lessons that could be used to accelerate and scale capability delivery.

*Question.* Based on your experience, how would you structure DOD to conduct better tradeoff analysis so that programmatic investments are not stove-piped and can be assessed against the impact of various alternatives?

*Answer.* I believe the Department needs to make better decisions, faster. Embracing more mission-focused or portfolio-focused analysis can better inform our decisions aligned to Secretary Hegseth's priorities. I understand that A&S is leading the way on capability portfolio management, and A&S, along with other key stakeholders, is executing mission-focused portfolio analysis. If confirmed, I will review the capability portfolio management and mission-focused analytics ongoing in the Department and look for ways to improve our ability to make the right decisions to rapidly and cost-effectively deliver capability to the warfighter.

#### OTHER TRANSACTIONS AUTHORITY (OTA)

*Question.* Do you believe DOD's use of the transition to production authority under OTAs has been adequately leveraged?

*Answer.* I anticipate there is more the Department can do to leverage this important statutory authority for follow-on production of prototype OTAs that were competitively awarded and successfully completed. I believe the Department should consider potential follow-on production early in the process and then assess its use during the prototyping phase. If confirmed, I would work to ensure the Department clearly communicates to industry the technical success criteria under a prototype project to rationalize any transition to production.

*Question.* What steps will you take to promote the appropriate use of OTAs to encourage the participation of new and non-traditional defense contractors in the defense industrial base?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will promote the appropriate use of OTAs with our defense acquisition workforce by emphasizing the benefits of the Department's increased access to the innovative capabilities non-traditional defense contractors provide as essential to outpace our adversaries. The Department must prioritize the acquisition of commercial and other non-developmental capabilities that private sector entities have already funded where appropriate. Secretary Hegseth's recent Software Acquisition Pathway memorandum directs the use of Commercial Solutions Openings and Other Transactions as the default solicitation and award approaches for acquiring capabilities under the Software Pathway. I believe this memorandum is an important first step to encouraging the participation of new and non-traditional defense contractors in our defense industrial base, and I look forward to partnering with DIU to scale this approach.

#### PLANNING, PROGRAMMING, BUDGETING, AND EXECUTION (PPBE)

*Question.* The Department's acquisition process is closely linked with its PPBE process, and acquisition programs can move only as nimbly as the budget processes that fund them. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 established a commission to examine and make recommendations for PPBE reform.

In your view, which of the Commission on PPBE Reform's final recommendations do you believe are most important to improving resource allocation and innovation in DOD?

Answer. I am committed to aligning the strategy, requirements, acquisition, and resource processes to support President Trump and Secretary Hegseth's priorities. Today, we are in an age of rapidly changing technology where technology becomes obsolete soon after it is developed—which means we must work to shorten the acquisition lifecycle, enable rapid technology refresh and modernization, and prioritize resource allocation against the capabilities that provide the most significant military advantage against our adversaries.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress, Secretary Hegseth, Deputy Secretary Feinberg, and across the Department to determine the needed changes to the process to ensure we have the greatest alignment of strategy, requirements, acquisition, and resourcing to achieve President Trump's mandate of Peace through Strength.

*Question.* What steps can the Department take to implement changes to PPBE of its own accord, and which changes do you think require congressional action?

Answer. The PPBE Commission devoted considerable time and effort to investigate reform opportunities and recommend much needed improvements to the Department's Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) process. It is my understanding that many of the Commission's recommendations may not require congressional action. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Under Secretary for Comptroller, and the Director of Cost Assessment and Program Analysis to prioritize the reforms within our control with the greatest potential impact to improve the Department's processes. Other recommendations that foster innovation and adaptability and provide flexibility to the Department will require significant collaboration with and action by the congressional defense committees. If confirmed, I commit to working with all stakeholders to ensure the strongest ties between strategy, acquisition, and resources to support President Trump and Secretary Hegseth's priorities.

*Question.* One of the major obstacles to successfully bringing emerging technologies into the Department's acquisition system is the so-called "valley of death," partially caused by the gap in funding between the development of a new technology and its transition into a program of record.

What changes are needed to the PPBE and other processes to help bridge the "valley of death"?

Answer. I believe the Department must find ways to ensure program managers and Department officials have the flexibility and authority to react to emerging technological opportunities, re-allocate resources as needed, and accelerate the transition of critical technologies across the valley of death. If confirmed, I will work with my team in A&S, as well as my colleagues in Comptroller, to explore acquisition solutions for improved operational integration. Moreover, if confirmed, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Military Departments, R&E, and DIU to ensure we establish technology transition partnerships and plans to ensure we deliver technologies to rapidly address warfighting needs.

*Question.* In your view, what changes in the roles of innovation offices like Defense Innovation Unit, AFWERX, and the Strategic Capabilities Office, or in established program offices, are necessary to make sure new technologies have the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities required to successfully transition to the field?

Answer. Acquisition is a life-cycle management activity that spans from basic research to sustainment and disposal. The innovation offices throughout the Department will continue to identify, develop, and acquire new products and technologies, some of which are not always designed with the DOTmLPPF requirements in mind. If confirmed, I will work with my partners in the innovation community, R&E, the Military Services, and the Comptroller, to improve the integration of new technology.

#### REQUIREMENTS

*Question.* Section 811 of the fiscal year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act required the Joint Staff to take a clean-sheet approach to the requirements process and section 884 of the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act created an independent advisory panel to review the requirements processes of DOD.

What is your view of the need for a clean-sheet approach to the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS), or do you believe incremental changes are sufficient?

Answer. I believe it is important to note that the Department's acquisition processes are more than just the DOD 5000 series acquisition policy and involve partners from across the Department in Joint Staff, CAPE, Comptroller, Policy, and others. Reforms to acquisitions can only go so far without related reforms to resourcing and requirements processes. Currently, no matter how fast an acquisition program can move, it is still locked into lengthy requirements and budgeting processes. If confirmed, I will work closely with the VCJCS to understand how we can improve requirements processes to align with agile acquisition methods, as well as the Comptroller and CAPE on how we resource to meet those requirements.

*Question.* If confirmed, what recommendations would you make to the requirements process to make it more adaptive to changes in threats and technologies?

Answer. I believe we can improve how requirements are developed, shifting the culture from overly prescriptive requirements that narrowly define the solution specifications to broader descriptive requirements that define the capability needs while providing flexibility to industry to innovate while developing and delivering a solution. This reform is essential to address rapidly evolving threats posed by our adversaries, such as cybersecurity and electronic warfare, as well as enable the incorporation of new technologies to address capability needs without prescribing solutions. If confirmed, I will work closely with the VCJCS to understand how we can improve requirements processes to align with agile acquisition methods.

*Question.* One critique of the requirements process is the interaction of "Big R" requirements approved, for example, in a Capabilities Development Document, and the "little r" requirements such as technical specifications in a contract solicitation.

Do you believe that program managers should have a stronger voice in requirements generation to ensure that technical implementation is feasible?

Answer. It is essential for the success of the Department's acquisition process that the requirement offices in the Military Departments work with the acquisition community to ensure they are incorporating the latest technologies and facts of life into their requirements. If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff and the Military Services to improve our ability to develop more flexible requirements and enable the acquisition community to embrace new approaches to take greater risk in capability development.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you improve the feedback between program execution and validated requirements when information on technologies, threats, and costs become available?

Answer. It is my understanding that most of the time, the acquisition process follows a sequential approach that develops a requirement, budgets for it, then acquires it, meaning the operator does not touch it until delivery. I believe that the Department requires a more iterative approach to meet the threats of the 21st century. If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff, the Services, and USD(R&E) to improve how we incorporate a warfighter centered design process into our acquisition and requirements processes.

*Question.* The USD(A&S) is not a member of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council but does advise the Secretary of Defense on how to acquire capabilities and what capabilities should be acquired.

In your opinion, should the requirements process for new capabilities continue to be primarily the province of the military departments, and military officers of the Joint Staff and the combatant commands?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* In your view, what should be the role of the Joint Staff in the requirements process versus the role of the military services?

Answer. I believe that it is critical we continue to let the Services drive their own requirements; however, I also believe that Joint Staff should be working to drive joint mission needs into Service requirements and ensuring that there is balance in addressing capability needs and gaps across the Services and Combatant Commands. We also need to ensure that joint mission needs and requirements are appropriately assigned to ensure execution and follow through in meeting those warfighting demands. If confirmed, I will work with the VCJCS to understand how A&S can better assist to ensure operational success in delivering capabilities to the warfighter.

*Question.* If confirmed, in what circumstances would you consider it appropriate to recommend that the Secretary invest in a capability you consider of high importance, for which there is either no formal requirement or no military department is funding a solution to a requirement?

Answer. I believe that, in special circumstances, the Secretaries of the Military Departments or the Secretary of Defense, after consulting with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, may establish requirements, including providing capabilities for allies or partner agencies. I believe that it is the role of the Under Secretary

of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment to advise the Secretary to invest in a capability that addresses critical issues to expedite delivery of essential capabilities through use of the Urgent Capability Acquisition pathway. I understand that A&S already plays a role in pursuing capabilities to address emergent and urgent needs through the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell, even when there is no formally established requirement, and no funding programmed by a Military Department. By all accounts, this has been a successful approach to meet many urgent needs and if confirmed I would seek ways to improve it.

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions would you recommend to improve joint requirements development and cross service communication in order to create more efficiency in the Department?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the VCJCS and the Services to explore how to improve joint requirements and cross-service collaboration. Concepts like cross-Service sharing of requirements documents, capability needs statements that define an operational problem rather than define the solution, and joint requirements development that define what the Joint Force needs could improve efficiency in our requirements processes.

#### TEST AND EVALUATION

*Question.* The objective of test and evaluation activities is to ensure that system performance meets specifications and requirements, and that deployed capabilities are operationally effective against threats.

Are you satisfied with the Department's test and evaluation capabilities? If confirmed, in which areas, if any, do you believe the Department should be developing new test and evaluation capabilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(R&E) and the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation (DOT&E) to ensure the Department of Defense (DoD) prioritizes investments in the most crucial test and evaluation (T&E) capabilities, as determined by the Secretary of Defense and the National Defense Strategy. As our innovators come up with new technologies, the Department will need new T&E capabilities and capacity to effectively test those technologies.

*Question.* Do you believe that current DOD test and evaluation facilities, personnel, and technical test infrastructure are up to par for what is needed for the modernization challenges of the Department now and in the near future?

Answer. It is important that the DOD maintain modern test and evaluation (T&E) infrastructure and a highly qualified workforce where necessary to ensure we can successfully test weapon systems that give our warfighters a decisive advantage. If confirmed, I will work with the DOT&E and the USD(R&E) to ensure A&S cooperation and support where the Department seeks to enhance test & evaluation capabilities.

*Question.* In your opinion, what is the appropriate role of developmental, operational, and live-fire testing in the acquisition process?

Answer. Developmental, operational, and live-fire testing are important aspects of the acquisition process to ensure our systems operate as intended and provide for the safety and security of our operators. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(R&E) and the DOT&E, to review the role of developmental, operational, and live-fire testing across the acquisition process.

*Question.* What recommendations would you make to tailor documentation and approvals for test and evaluation for rapid acquisition, if any?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(R&E) and the DOT&E to review the existing test and evaluation rapid acquisition documentation and approval process to determine if changes or tailoring are needed and, if necessary, work to tailor them as appropriate.

*Question.* How should DOD test and evaluation capabilities support software and other efforts that require rapid iteration between development and deployment?

Answer. Early and continuous testing throughout the software life cycle is crucial to support effective and efficient evaluations and delivery timelines. I support integrating, streamlining, and automating testing processes to enable rapid analysis of test data and evaluation of system operational effectiveness, suitability, and survivability. Program success depends on maximum sharing, reciprocity, availability, and reuse of test results and artifacts among testing and certification organizations.

*Question.* If confirmed, under what circumstances would you support programs accepting more risk upfront (e.g., flight test failures) to attempt to accelerate fielding schedules for a potential conflict with China?

Answer. In recent years, the Department's test and evaluation community has sought to integrate aspects of developmental and operational testing and conduct

such testing early in the acquisition process. If confirmed, I would seek pathways to accelerate these efforts to ensure early and frequent testing to accelerate fielding.

*Question.* In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of increasing the integration among the developmental, acquisition, and testing communities?

*Answer.* Integration across the acquisition lifecycle through early collaborative test planning and execution will work to reduce late discovery of system issues and deficiencies.

*Question.* What other reforms would you recommend to improve the timeliness, efficiency, and effectiveness of the test and evaluation process to more quickly correct technical deficiencies in weapon systems?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would look to increase the use of digital ecosystems to integrate mission engineering, systems engineering, and test and evaluation to mitigate weapon system deficiencies.

*Question.* What do you see as the operational test and evaluation needs for non-developmental or commercial items to ensure they can still meet the technical requirements and human factors needs of environments often more complex and demanding than commercial settings?

*Answer.* It is vital that we continue to integrate existing commercial and non-developmental capabilities to meet our technical requirements in efforts to achieve cost effectiveness, resilience, and drive rapid innovation. However, commercial technologies often aren't designed to operate under contested, high-stress, and complex environments—including adversary electronic warfare and cyber capabilities. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(R&E) to ensure that technology readiness experimentation evaluates commercial technologies to measure readiness for the modern battlefield. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with industry, particularly nontraditional defense contractors, to implement these processes.

#### DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE (DIB)

*Question.* Over the past several years, there have been increasing concerns in Congress, industry, and the Department over the health of the DIB and its ability to reliably meet current and future defense needs. The war in Ukraine has showcased how challenging it is to restart and increase relevant munitions supply chains. Additionally, many supply chains have single points of failure and/or remain reliant on non-allied sources of material.

If confirmed, what do you assess to be the most significant challenges facing the DIB and how would you propose to address them?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the most significant challenges facing the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) stem from steady de-industrialization over the last 50 years and the scale of our supply chain resilience issues. Unpredictable budgets and investments weaken the DOD-industrial base relationship and limit interest in DOD as a customer. If confirmed, I will work with Congress to assess the issues within the DIB, promote capabilities through targeted investment, increase private capital investment to increase production capacity, protect against adversarial capital and cyber intrusions, and partner with international partners and allies.

*Question.* What steps will you take to ensure that the DIB has the appropriate manufacturing and production infrastructure to support current and future needs of DOD? Are there additional authorities that would be useful?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will prioritize strengthening the Defense Industrial Base's (DIB) manufacturing and production infrastructure to meet the DOD's evolving needs. This begins with a comprehensive assessment, conducted in close collaboration with the Military Departments, to identify current and future production demands and pinpoint existing capability gaps.

I recognize the importance of the Defense Production Act (DPA) as a powerful tool for shaping the industrial base. I am committed to utilizing existing DPA authorities when authorized. If confirmed, I will actively engage with Congress to explore whether expanding DPA authorities would further enhance our ability to build the necessary capacities and address emerging challenges in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

*Question.* What do you see as the levers to motivate the defense industrial base to make additional capital investment (for facilities and tooling), as well as research and development investments to increase the capacity of the defense industrial base?

*Answer.* First, the DOD must provide a clear and consistent demand signal to industry. This means streamlining the acquisition process, reducing regulatory barriers, and increasing the use of multi-year procurements to demonstrate a commitment to long-term business and incentivize investment. At the same time, fostering competition within the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) spurs companies to innovate

and invest to remain competitive. Finally, we should strategically leverage existing investment vehicles, through programs like the Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment (IBAS), to forge strong public-private partnerships that share both the risks and rewards of bolstering the DIB. If confirmed, I would seek to develop this collaborative approach to equip the DIB with the tools and capacity needed to meet current and future national security challenges.

*Question.* What steps should the Department take—on its own or as part of a “whole of government” approach—to increase domestic industrial capacity and reduce reliance on suppliers in China and on other adversaries?

*Answer.* Reducing reliance on supply chains in adversarial nations, particularly China, for critical defense components requires a “whole-of-nation” approach that prioritizes the growth and resilience of America’s defense industrial base. The DOD can lead this effort by incentivizing commercial industry to onshore supply chains, expanding domestic manufacturing capabilities, and prioritizing U.S. productivity and competitiveness. This includes working across government agencies, such as the State Department and the Department of Commerce, to implement strategic export controls, promote fair trade practices, and foster a more robust and secure domestic supply chain for critical components and platforms.

*Question.* What actions should the Department take to address the threat of “adversarial capital” from China and other sources that seek to gain undue influence over the DIB?

*Answer.* The threat of “adversarial capital” from China and other foreign adversaries seeking to gain influence over the U.S. Defense Industrial Base (DIB) represents a significant and evolving challenge. These adversaries employ a range of tactics, including strategic investments, corporate acquisitions, and technology transfer, to gain access to sensitive technologies, compromise supply chains, and potentially undermine U.S. national security.

If confirmed, I look forward to countering these threats through an approach that leverages the full range of government authorities and fosters close collaboration with international allies. This includes robust implementation of existing tools like the Committee for Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), Team Telecom, and export controls to scrutinize foreign investments.

*Question.* In your view, what is the appropriate role for the Department with respect to proposed and ongoing private sector merger and acquisition activities of DOD contractors?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that DOD’s role with respect to merger and acquisition (M&A) activities of DOD contractors is to assess any anti-competitive implications on the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) and to their impacts to the industrial and technological base, competition and innovation, and the public interest. Excessive consolidation can reduce competition, hurt innovation, and lead to higher costs. A vibrant, competitive, and diverse defense industrial base is vital to the department. DOD is responsible for ensuring our Nation’s security and is in a unique position to assess the impact of potential defense industry consolidation on its ability to fulfill its mission, while maintaining awareness of how ongoing M&A activities influence the DIB. In certain cases, the Department should voice concerns when a merger or acquisition could adversely impact the cost, schedule, or performance of defense acquisition programs, or hinder the research and development of critical defense technologies. This proactive approach is particularly important when adversary nations and their business interests attempt to acquire or influence defense industry members or their supporting supply chains.

*Question.* In your view, what actions can be taken to expand existing efforts of the Manufacturing Capability Expansion & Investment Prioritization office within USD(A&S) to further invest in domestic and allied production of required materials and products?

*Answer.* Investment in domestic and allied production of required materials and products are important to ensure we maintain a healthy and resilient defense industrial base. I am committed to applying authorities and resources to maximize the resilience of our defense industrial base and prioritize domestic production, and if confirmed, look forward to understanding how the Manufacturing Capability Expansion and Investment Prioritization (MCEIP) office can better utilize the authorities granted by the Defense Production Act (DPA) and the Industrial Base Fund to achieve those objectives.

*Question.* How can the Department better leverage suppliers in the national technology and industrial base (NTIB) and among other allies and partners?

*Answer.* The Department can better leverage suppliers in the NTIB by continuing to build and strengthen relationships amongst existing and new participants in defense acquisition as well as identifying and addressing barriers to integrating ally and partner organizations into the DIB. Working closely with private capital, aca-

demia, and leaders in tech and other Defense-adjacent industries can provide the Department a wider array of companies, skillsets, and technologies, which can help modernize our overarching technological base and build resiliency.

*Question.* Do you think it is possible for the venture capital and private equity community to play some role in supporting the DIB, and if so, how?

Answer. Yes. These communities are already investing in defense-related technologies and supporting the mission, often without cost to taxpayers. If confirmed, I am committed to finding effective ways to harness private capital to accelerate the growth of a more resilient defense industrial ecosystem.

To further leverage the potential of these communities, the Department must improve transparency regarding its priorities and strengthen the consistency of its demand signals. Clear and consistent communication will allow investors to make more informed decisions and direct capital toward technologies critical to national security. We must also strive to better understand how the venture capital and private equity communities operate, fostering stronger relationships and tailored engagement strategies. By bridging the knowledge gap and building trust, we can unlock even greater support for the DIB from these vital sources of innovation and capital.

*Question.* The NDAA for fiscal year 2021 established an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy, responsible for overseeing the Department's efforts to manage and support the DIB.

In your view, what should be the key priorities and activities of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy?

Answer. If confirmed in the role of USD(A&S), I will ensure that the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy (ASD(IBP)) plays a crucial role in assuring the United States maintains its military superiority through the DIB. As articulated by the President, achieving "Peace through Strength" necessitates a robust and responsive defense industrial base. Achieving this will require strengthening domestic supply chains, particularly in critical areas like critical minerals, microelectronics, and hypersonics, while also mitigating vulnerabilities and fostering resilience against potential disruptions.

To effectively execute this mission, the Department should prioritize the development and implementation of comprehensive strategies that expand and empower the DIB. This requires a thorough understanding of the DIB's current capabilities and identification of existing gaps that need to be addressed. Equally important is leveraging legislative tools like the Defense Production Act to incentivize domestic production and innovation. By fostering a healthy and diverse industrial base, promoting collaboration, and championing technological advancement, we can ensure the U.S. maintains its competitive edge in an increasingly complex global landscape.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure the office of this Assistant Secretary is adequately resourced (in terms of personnel, budget, and authority) and provided with the high-level support necessary to perform its duties and responsibilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and across the Department to secure adequate authorities and ensure a team with expertise is well positioned to tackle the complexities of the DIB. Adequate and appropriate resources and support are crucial to effectively carry out Industrial Base Policy's mission.

In addition to authorities, consistent and predictable funding is crucial for long-term success. Stable funding allows the Department to send strong signals to industry partners, enabling them to confidently invest in and expand the DIB.

In early 2024 the Department released the first ever "National Defense Industrial Strategy", or NDIS, to guide DIB engagement, policy development, and investment over the next several years.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you retain or adjust the priorities established in the National Defense Industrial Strategy?

Answer. The National Defense Industrial Strategy and its implementation plan outline a framework to address industrial base challenges faced by the DOD, Congress, and industry. If confirmed, I will adjust and align the NDIS strategic direction to ensure that it reflects the new administration's strategic objectives and aligns with the National Defense Strategy. It will be important to build upon the momentum initiated by the NDIS, by continuing to integrate and improve with new guidance, to further DIB resilience and preparedness for future conflicts.

#### DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE CYBERSECURITY

*Question.* What is your understanding of the challenges of enhancing cybersecurity of the DIB?

Answer. My understanding of the DIB cybersecurity challenge is that the cyber landscape changes very rapidly, and it can be difficult to balance the pace at which

Department of Defense (DoD) and industry need to react to evolving threats with the implementation timelines industry needs to comply as adversaries continue to evolve their tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP). Cyber-attacks on DIB information systems threaten DOD mission execution, reduce warfighting capabilities, weaken American technological superiority, and exfiltrate both intellectual property and national security information.

It is my understanding that the cyber capabilities of the companies in the DIB vary greatly. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the current State of DOD cybersecurity requirements for our industry partners and working to ensure we balance a need for security with the burdens of excessive regulation.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you balance the needs of improving cybersecurity with the burden of compliance on small and medium sized businesses? Are there authorities or resources within DOD that could help mitigate some of those compliance burdens?

*Answer.* Bolstering cybersecurity across the DIB without placing undue burdens on small and medium-sized businesses is critical. These businesses are often more vulnerable to cyberattacks due to resource constraints, yet they play a vital role in our Nation's defense.

Access to secure facilities, such as SCIFs, is often cost-prohibitive for smaller companies. If confirmed, I will actively explore the feasibility of multi-use SCIFs and other shared resource models to alleviate this burden and ensure equitable access to classified information.

In the last few years, the focus of the Acquisition & Sustainment model has been on one element of the framework: the Cybersecurity Maturity Model certification (CMMC).

*Question.* If confirmed, are there any changes you would make or recommend to the CMMC efforts beyond those already mandated by the Deputy Secretary, including CMMC 2.0?

*Answer.* I recognize the critical importance of ensuring that contractual requirements for protecting DOD information are met by defense contractors. If confirmed, I will review the current requirements of the CMMC program and evaluate options to improve the requirements and implementation so that industry can affordably maintain pace with current cybersecurity best practices.

*Question.* What is your view of the role of the certified third-party assessment organizations?

*Answer.* Managing and assessing cybersecurity compliance are important roles to ensure our DIB partners are applying cybersecurity best practices to protect critical information. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing current and potential mechanisms to assess compliance, including third-party assessment organizations.

*Question.* What do you believe is the appropriate role of the CMMC Advisory Board (CMMC-AB)?

*Answer.* Cybersecurity accreditation is an important role to ensure our DIB partners understand our requirements in applying cybersecurity best practices to protect critical information. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing our accreditation procedures to ensure our requirements keep pace with the threat and manage the burden on the industrial base.

#### DEFENSE PRODUCTION ACT (DPA)

*Question.* In 2020, the Defense Production Act (DPA) was successfully leveraged during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide vital response materials, including through Operation Warp Speed, accelerating vaccine development and the delivery of other COVID-related medical supplies.

What is your understanding of how DOD has leveraged DPA authorities, including as an interagency funding mechanism, during the pandemic and post-pandemic?

*Answer.* My understanding is Defense Production Act (DPA) Title III has been leveraged to sustain and expand production in areas where national security was considered to be at risk. I understand the Department has coordinated with other agencies to understand risks in the industrial base that could impact national security, as well as how DPA authorities could be leveraged to mitigate them. During the pandemic, the Department worked with Health and Human Services (HHS) to understand where DPA authorities could be best leveraged to increase production capacity to respond to COVID-19. Since the pandemic, DPA Title III investments have allowed us to begin removing China from our supply chains.

*Question.* What are your views on DOD's use of DPA Title III authorities to support the defense industrial base?

*Answer.* The Defense Production Act (DPA) is a critical tool for rebuilding our defense industrial base and ultimately reestablishing deterrence. We can do more to

expedite DPA Title III awards, but I am aware the DPA Title III program is already enabling the Department to make investments directly in the sub-tiers of the defense industrial base, especially into areas where private industry is unwilling to invest, which otherwise would not be possible. If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring the Department continues to focus our use of the DPA on national defense, in line with the President's and Secretary Hegseth's priorities, existing statute, and in coordination with Congress.

*Question.* What are your views on the DPA loan and loan guarantee programs? If confirmed, would you advocate expanding these programs? How would you monitor the effectiveness of the loan program?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would review the benefits and challenges of expanding the DPA activities of the Department into loan and loan guarantee programs. I understand the Department has established loans and loan guarantees in other parts of DOD, like the Office of Strategic Capital (OSC), to incentivize private capital investments to transform capability for the DIB, and I will look to better understand how an expansion of the DPA loan program office can complement and enhance the DIB in cooperation with OSC's loan program.

*Question.* Do you have any recommendations to improve the effectiveness of how DOD employs DPA Title III authorities?

*Answer.* My understanding is that there are ongoing efforts to develop legislative proposals to update the DPA for the modern era. If confirmed, I plan to support that process and prioritize the most effective application of DPA authorities to strengthen the DIB, including expanding the Department's ability to incentivize private investment and accelerate its impact in expanding domestic industrial base capability and capacity.

#### ORGANIC INDUSTRIAL BASE

*Question.* In your opinion, what role does the organic industrial base play in modernization efforts and in the sustainment of warfighting capabilities?

*Answer.* The Organic Industrial Base plays an important role in bolstering the defense industrial base's primary goal of ensuring sustained readiness of DOD weapon systems and equipment throughout the lifecycle. By providing essential resources like facilities, skilled personnel, technical expertise, and equipment, the OIB supports critical activities including maintenance, repair, overhaul, upgrade, and manufacturing to meet operational needs. Additionally, the OIB enables the Department to rapidly scale production and sustainment capabilities during periods of heightened demand.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the status of the facilities and workforce in DOD depots, logistics centers, arsenals, and other elements of the organic industrial base?

*Answer.* I believe that the Organic Industrial Base, to include our depots, logistics centers, and arsenals, serves an important role in maintaining military readiness. If confirmed, I will work with the Services to formally assess the State of our OIB and assess the need to foster continued modernization of the OIB to ensure the Department maintains the proper mix of capabilities to meet future warfighting needs while staying adaptable for future missions.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to strengthen the Department's organic industrial base?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with the Administration and Congress to assess the areas of greatest need and, where necessary, request resources to support the modernization and optimization of our OIB facilities and workforce, together with other key elements of our domestic defense industrial base. This would include a thorough analysis of the current State of OIB infrastructure, workforce, and capabilities to identify strengths, gaps, and areas requiring urgent attention to ensure we are applying the most modern capabilities to ensure we maximize the readiness of our military forces.

#### SUSTAINMENT

*Question.* DOD has committed to rebuild its readiness to conduct large-scale combat operations against near-peer competitors such as China and Russia. The readiness of critical weapon systems relies on the quantity and timeliness of sustainment. However, sustainment challenges continue to impede readiness across the warfighting domains and military services.

What is your assessment of the sustainment challenges facing the Department's naval vessels, ground vehicles, and aviation fleets, and what actions would you take to improve mission capable rates for these fleets?

*Answer.* I understand that sustainment is often an afterthought during the acquisition process. And yet, as we saw during the nominee for the Secretary of the Navy's confirmation hearing, corrosion and other sustainment challenges are limiting the readiness of our critical systems and inflating the costs of our weapons systems. I believe that renewed focus on anticipating, planning for, and addressing sustainment issues on the front end of the lifecycle of weapons systems will help the Department improve weapon system reliability and maintainability. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that we have the proper policies and resources to achieve sustainment priorities in partnership with the Military Services.

*Question.* In your opinion, what steps should DOD take to ensure our ability to execute the current and expected volume of platform maintenance and modernization?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work across A&S and with the Military Services to understand the specific challenges facing platform maintenance and modernization to drive closer collaboration. However, in general, I believe that the Department can invest in focused and predictable infrastructure upgrades and modernization, workforce development, improvement of predictive maintenance practices through better data, including technical data, and conduct periodic reviews of maintenance and modernization operations to better identify bottlenecks, inefficiencies, and areas for improvement. I believe that, by taking these actions, the Department can meet both current operational demands as well as build a resilient and adaptable framework capable of addressing future challenges.

*Question.* In your view, what are the biggest challenges in the sustainment of commercial technologies that are fielded to warfighters?

*Answer.* I understand that the sustainment of fielded commercial technologies poses significant challenges for warfighter readiness and can be expensive because the commercial providers operate outside of our acquisition lifecycle and they operate on a proprietary basis which may increase the risk of vendor lock. Additionally, I understand that the cost for the sustainment of commercial technologies is not always programmed. If confirmed, I look forward to working with stakeholders across the Department to tackle the challenges associated with the sustainment of commercial technologies to ensure the warfighter has interoperable tools they need to complete the mission. Our warfighters must be adequately trained on rapidly evolving commercial technologies while managing long-term sustainment costs of legacy equipment.

#### IMPROVING PLANNING FOR SUSTAINMENT

*Question.* The GAO has reported that operation and sustainment (O&S) costs account for about 70 percent of a system's total lifecycle costs.

In your opinion, how well are the Department's acquisition programs planning for sustainment?

*Answer.* I strongly believe in the importance of prioritizing sustainment planning early in the acquisition process in order to reduce life-cycle costs. While I am aware the existing policy currently requires this level of planning, there is always potential for further improvement. If confirmed, I will collaborate across A&S and the Military Services and Defense Agencies to strengthen sustainment efforts by continuing to integrate comprehensive planning into new programs and focus on refining sustainment strategies for existing programs at every stage of a weapon system's lifecycle to enhance readiness, efficiency, and long-term effectiveness.

*Question.* Do you believe that the military services are adequately resourcing activities to resolve diminishing manufacturing sources and material shortages?

*Answer.* Based on my experience, I believe that the Military Services are taking diminishing manufacturing sources and material shortages and related activities seriously. If confirmed, I will seek information on actions being done to address diminishing manufacturing sources and material shortages and pursue appropriate solutions to reduce associated risks to material readiness.

*Question.* What is your view of the benefits of introducing second sources of supply into weapon systems component and parts manufacturing, if any?

*Answer.* I believe that introducing second sources of supply by qualified vendors enhances competition, reduces dependency on a single supplier, prevents vendor lock by introducing competition, improves resilience to disruptions, and can lower costs while ensuring a more reliable and diversified supply chain for weapon system components. Additionally, having more suppliers increases our ability to respond to critical backorders from our warfighters, and improves our ability to surge.

*Question.* Section 865 of the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act seeks to expedite qualification and testing of alternative sources of supply and section 882 seeks to remove policy barriers to reverse engineering.

If confirmed, how would you use section 865 and section 882 to improve the timeliness of the qualification, certification, and test processes for new sources of supply?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to implement authorities from Congress that are aimed at removing barriers to securing alternative sources of supply across commercial and organic solution types. A balance between the need to move quickly with the need to safeguard our systems will ensure that any reverse engineering efforts enhance our warfighters' ability to protect our national interests and defend our homeland. Additionally, if confirmed, I will work expedite the qualification of new suppliers in critical areas like energetic materials and advanced manufacturing by establishing clear timelines, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and exploring innovative testing methods. A streamlined process will attract a wider range of companies, fostering competition, innovation, and a more responsive defense industrial base.

*Question.* What additional recommendations do you have for expanding the industrial base to create more timely and cost-effective supply of spare and repair parts?

Answer. Increasing the overall production capacity of the DIB is paramount as we seek to reduce our reliance on supply chains in adversarial nations and increase our domestic supply chain resilience. To expand the industrial base to create a more timely and cost-effective supply of spare and repair parts, we need to expand utilization of existing authorities to help fund new capacity in partnership with industry investments. If confirmed, I will build upon this framework to ensure we utilize all funding and acquisition methods to increase our industrial capacity.

*Question.* In your opinion, what is the opportunity for advanced manufacturing techniques such as 3D printing to reduce cost and lead times for parts that are currently ordered in low production volumes?

Answer. I believe there is opportunity to use advanced manufacturing capabilities, such as 3D printing, to reduce cost and lead times for parts that are currently ordered in low production volumes. On-Demand manufacturing, decentralized production, customization, rapid prototyping, and supply chain resilience can translate to substantial cost savings, increased operational readiness, and a more agile and resilient military supply chain. If confirmed, I will seek to understand what specific advanced manufacturing efforts are ongoing at the Department and work with my colleagues at OUSD(R&E) to implement advanced manufacturing techniques and standards where appropriate to aid the warfighter and reduce sustainment costs.

*Question.* Are there additional incentives or strategies, such as royalties, the Department should use when negotiating with industry to ensure there are multiple suppliers for spare parts?

Answer. Ensuring a robust and diverse supply chain for spare parts is critical for maintaining readiness and avoiding single points of failure. If confirmed, I will explore a range of incentives to encourage multiple suppliers.

If confirmed, I will promote the utilization of advanced manufacturing techniques, as long as the resulting parts meet performance specifications. This approach fosters innovation and competition while reducing reliance on traditional sole-source providers.

Finally, I believe that conducting comprehensive supply chain analyses to identify and mitigate risks associated with third, fourth, and fifth-tier suppliers is crucial to prevent inadvertent single-source dependencies from emerging deeper within the supply chain. By implementing these multifaceted strategies, we can foster a healthier and more resilient industrial base capable of meeting our spare parts needs now and into the future.

#### FACILITIES SUSTAINMENT

*Question.* To combat the growing \$180 billion facilities sustainment backlog, in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, Congress required each of the military departments to budget at least 4 percent of their total plant replacement value (PRV) by 2030.

If confirmed, what approach will you take to address this backlog, ensure the Department is following the law to meet the PRV metrics leading up to 2030 and to ensure that facility sustainment funding is sufficiently prioritized and funded? Please specify aspects of the approach such as increased funding, elimination of excess infrastructure, and addressing infrastructure in failing condition.

Answer. Our installations are critical to both the warfighting mission and the quality of life of our military members and their families. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments and other DOD components to ensure investments in our infrastructure meet the requirements of the warfighter and their families, are efficiently sized and maintained to provide maximum value to the U.S. taxpayer, and are fully compliant with statutory requirements.

## ACQUIRING COMMERCIAL TECHNOLOGY

*Question.* Since the end of the cold war, Congress and successive leaders in DOD have recognized that the technological superiority and modernization that is critical to national security increasingly takes place in the commercial sector, and that in many technical areas, the pace of commercial technological advance is much quicker than that of the government.

In your view, has DOD adequately complied with statute establishing a commercial item preference? Why or why not?

*Answer.* I believe the Department can do more to leverage commercial and other non-developmental capabilities that private sector entities have already funded. My understanding is that statute directs the congressional preference for establishing a commercial item of preference. If confirmed, I will review the Department's current compliance with this statute, and ensure we are maximizing effective application to leverage technological advancements of the commercial sector while balancing the need to successfully integrate those technologies into the DOD ecosystem.

*Question.* Do you believe that DOD's acquisition practices sufficiently incentivize programs to opt for commercial items? If so, what processes would you recommend changing?

*Answer.* I believe it is important to ensure the Department is incentivizing DOD programs to opt for commercial items where it is most beneficial to the warfighter. Secretary Hegseth's recent issuance on "Directing Modern Software Acquisition to Maximize Lethality" is a good example of prioritizing commercial solutions. His direction to employ the Commercial Solutions Openings and Other Transactions as the default solicitation and award approaches for software development will drive the Department to prioritize existing capabilities in the marketplace.

*Question.* In your view, have Commercial Solutions Openings been a useful solicitation process for adopting commercial technologies and innovative solutions? What recommendations would you make to improve Commercial Solutions Openings, if any?

*Answer.* I understand Commercial Solutions Openings (CSOs) have proven to be a useful solicitation process to enable the Department to adopt commercial technologies and innovative solutions. If confirmed, I will examine how the Department has used CSOs, particularly for software development as Secretary Hegseth has directed, to understand whether any legislative or other improvements are necessary.

*Question.* In your opinion, are there new ways to reward and incentivize the acquisition workforce and programs to choose commercial solutions, if available?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will lead a culture in the Department's acquisition community that celebrates the adoption of existing commercial solutions in support of warfighting and other capabilities where it benefits the warfighter. I would seek to establish a culture that prioritizes results and provide the necessary resources to encourage our workforce to employ modern business approaches to meet today's challenges.

*Question.* In your view, how should the USD(A&S) work with the Chairman of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council to promote the acquisition of commercial technologies?

*Answer.* I believe there should be a close partnership between USD(A&S), the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Military Services to modernize DOD's requirements system. If confirmed, I would look to partner with the appropriate stakeholders to reform the system to integrate operational needs "requirements pull" with commercial solutions "tech push," informed by experimentation, via a collaborative, iterative approach to exploit new technologies and adapt our ways of fighting.

*Question.* Do you believe the Department is making the best use of both Part 12 and Part 15 of the Federal Acquisition Regulations in developing acquisition strategies for programs?

*Answer.* I understand the Administration is advancing a bold initiative to overhaul the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and that the OUSD(A&S) staff are actively engaged. If confirmed, I will lead the effort to understand how FAR Parts 12 and 15 need to be transformed to optimize acquisition rules and reduce or eliminate costly burdens that stifle broader industry participation.

*Question.* Congress and the Department have prioritized the entry of nontraditional defense contractors into the defense industrial base.

What changes, if any, would you recommend to the definition of nontraditional defense contractors?

*Answer.* I believe any changes to the statutory definition of nontraditional defense contractors should be grounded in the principle of maximizing competition amongst

all types of companies to expand the defense industrial base. If confirmed, I will assess this more closely and offer any recommendations to the Congress for statutory change.

*Question.* What recommendations do you have to changes to the definition of non-traditional defense contractors, if any? Do you believe that nontraditional defense contractors should be treated commercially to the maximum extent practicable? Why or why not?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will assess this more closely and will work with the Administration to offer any recommendations to the Congress for statutory change.

*Question.* Nontraditional defense contractors often take significant risk using private sources of funds to develop technologies. What recommendations do you have for achieving fair and reasonable pricing for products and services supplied by non-traditional defense contractors that recognizes their privately funded risk and lack of government-compliant business systems?

*Answer.* I believe the current practice for pricing of Defense contracts allows for these considerations to be fully addressed, compensated in a sole source context, and included as a company sees fit in any competitively submitted price proposals. However, there is always room for improvement, and if confirmed I would look into this issue to see how nontraditional companies can better balance their risk to foster increased collaboration with DOD.

#### INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

*Question.* Do you believe that DOD has implemented intellectual property (IP) best practices sufficiently to ensure that the government has appropriate access to IP and technical data?

*Answer.* I believe that the Department has made progress in implementing best practices through updated guidance, training, tools, and communication, but the Department has not yet realized the full spectrum of intellectual property (IP) best practices necessary to ensure that the Government has appropriate access to IP, including technical data and associated licensing. I believe the acquisition of life-cycle IP early in the program must be a higher strategic priority. I believe this will be key to making sustainment more agile and affordable and ensure DOD can take full advantage of industry's faster pace in technology innovation.

*Question.* What is your view on the Department's adequacy of enforcing data rights it has already negotiated onto contracts, such as through invalidation of improper rights assertions, and ensuring delivery of data ordering?

*Answer.* If confirmed, my initial focus in this area will be to better understand the obstacles that DOD program personnel are facing in enforcing delivery of data and accompanying rights it has already negotiated in contracts. If confirmed, I will review the existing mandatory processes and procedures for invalidating improper rights assertions and review whether there are constraints on compelling contract performance that may be impeding delivery. If confirmed, I will also work with the Department's Intellectual Property Cadre to understand the challenges regarding available enforcement mechanisms and Department practices to support warfighter needs.

*Question.* If confirmed, what adjustments would you make to DOD's practices in negotiating IP and technical data rights for programs in order to improve DOD's ability to develop, procure, and sustain new systems and technologies affordably?

*Answer.* If confirmed, my initial focus in this area will be to better understand the practical obstacles that DOD program personnel are facing related to IP. To thrive in this environment, I anticipate the need to improve our training in identifying IP requirements and negotiating to meet the needs. If confirmed, I would ensure the workforce takes greater advantage of agile tools and techniques such as non-traditional contracting methods, negotiating specialized licenses, and fully implementing modular open systems approaches in DOD programs.

#### REFORM OF THE PROTEST PROCESS

*Question.* To what extent do you think the time required to settle protests warrants reform in order to protect the interests of both industry and the government?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the regulatory and policy approaches along with the recommendations to determine what changes, if any, are necessary.

*Question.* Do you have any recommendations on how to improve the protest process?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the bid protest processes and consider recommendations to improve existing processes where possible.

## SMALL BUSINESS

*Question.* In your view, what are the biggest barriers that prevent small businesses from doing business with the Department?

*Answer.* In my view, some of the biggest barriers to entry for new companies are the number of entry points into the Department, the complexity of the DOD procurement process, and the challenges that new companies face when seeking to understand and comply with necessary industrial security requirements. I understand that the Office of Small Business Programs, which reports to the USD(A&S), is the principal advisor to this official and the Secretary of Defense on all issues affecting small businesses that want to work with the Department. If confirmed, I would work with my fellow Under Secretaries of Defense and the Director of the Office of Small Business Programs on leveraging the tools, programs, and authorities to address these issues and mitigate barriers to entry.

*Question.* In your view, what are the biggest barriers that prevent small businesses from becoming prime contractors for the Department?

*Answer.* I understand the Office of Small Business Programs provides guidance and administers statutory programs to increase the number of small business prime contractors and suppliers in the DIB. In my view, one of the biggest barriers preventing small businesses from becoming prime contractors for the Department is the lack of experience or knowledge of defense acquisition processes. If confirmed, I will work with the Director of the Office of Small Business Programs to make the Department a more attractive customer by reducing administrative barriers and supporting the statutory tools and programs that Congress has authorized.

*Question.* Do you believe the Department is using all available authorities to provide small businesses the opportunity to subcontract with existing prime contractors in order to ensure that programs of record have access to the most advanced and effective technologies?

*Answer.* My understanding is that the Department has numerous authorities and programs that work to ensure small businesses have the maximum practicable opportunity to compete for subcontracts, such as the DOD Mentor-Protégé Program, the DOD APEX Accelerators program, the Indian Incentive Program, and the Rapid Integrated Scalable Enterprise, among others. If confirmed, I would work with the Director of the Office of Small Business Programs to better understand these programs and ensure that the Department is leveraging these authorities to ensure that Defense programs have access to the most advanced and effective technologies.

*Question.* What do you see as the benefits of diversifying the defense industrial base through more engagement with small and disadvantaged businesses?

*Answer.* The magnitude of demands on DOD is putting compressed needs and demands on industry contributions to those efforts, increasing the importance of main street small businesses to help fulfill the needs. It will require a robust defense industrial ecosystem to successfully deter the rising threats to our National Security.

A diverse and resilient industrial base, powered by a robust ecosystem of small businesses, sends a strong signal to our adversaries about our ability to mobilize the full weight of the U.S. economy in support of our national security. It demonstrates our capacity to tap into the ingenuity and determination that have always defined America, and to harness that power in service of our defense.

*Question.* DOD continues to struggle to meet all its small business goals. Do you believe the current small business goals for the Department are achievable? Should the small business goals be adjusted?

*Answer.* My understanding is that historically the Department of Defense has met its overarching small business prime contracting goals. I am committed to supporting Department programs and initiatives that promote genuine small business participation in the DIB while reducing barriers to their participation. My understanding is that, in alignment with congressional intent, the small business goals have been adjusted to the statutory levels prescribed in the Small Business Act. If confirmed, I will work with the Director of the Office of Small Business Programs on efforts to achieve the Department's statutory small business goals, including regulatory relief and modernizing of acquisition processes, and, if necessary, recommend adjustments for congressional consideration.

## ACQUISITION WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

*Question.* A well-trained and empowered acquisition workforce is a critical enabler in the implementation of acquisition reform and in the management of acquisition programs.

What is your assessment of the Department's acquisition workforce, both in terms of its capacity and capability? Does the Department have enough acquisition professionals with the right skills?

**Answer.** I believe that the Department of Defense's acquisition workforce is critical to equipping the warfighter and maintaining our lethality. Rebuilding our military and reestablishing deterrence requires an acquisition workforce capable of using innovative practices across the full spectrum of the acquisition and sustainment lifecycle. If confirmed, I will evaluate the workforce's capacity and capability to ensure the Department has the right mix of acquisition professionals with the necessary expertise to support the warfighter.

**Question.** In what ways does the DOD civilian workforce take on tasks that would otherwise have to be done by military personnel, and thus taking them away from their core warfighting functions? What do you see as the pros and cons of civilian versus military acquisition professionals?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I will ensure the Department maximizes the effectiveness of both its civilian and military acquisition professionals while prioritizing military readiness and lethality. The DOD civilian workforce plays a critical role in sustaining warfighter capabilities by handling essential acquisition, logistics, and sustainment functions—allowing uniformed personnel to focus on operational and warfighting tasks. Civilians provide continuity, specialized expertise, and long-term program management critical to the defense industrial base. Similarly, our uniformed acquisition professionals bring current operational expertise which ensures warfighting capabilities are integrated. If confirmed, my focus will be on efficiency, accountability, and ensuring that acquisition professionals—whether civilian or military—are advancing the Department's mission in the most effective manner possible.

**Question.** If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure the acquisition workforce is fully trained on new acquisition authorities and best practices, so that it can make informed decisions about when and how to use the different acquisition pathways and tools available to it?

**Answer.** The President and Secretary Hegseth have made it clear that preparing the workforce to meet the challenges we face as a Nation and a Department is a top priority. If confirmed, it will be my responsibility to support the Military Services and Components in developing an agile, responsive Defense acquisition workforce. I believe that it is critical to empower the workforce with the tools that allow it to innovate, upskill, and operate as an agile and enduring advantage supporting the new National Defense Strategy. Additionally, training must evolve to align with new acquisition approaches, such as the Adaptive Acquisition Framework. I understand that there are several workforce initiatives in progress. If confirmed, I will review each to make sure we have effective planning and investments to support the workforce.

**Question.** What is your assessment of the Department's training, education, certification, and credentialing programs for the acquisition workforce? Are there "health metrics" that the DOD is or could be using to help ensure that the acquisition workforce is adequately sized for all of the tasks assigned to it?

**Answer.** In our current threat environment, workforce skills requirements are constantly evolving and require continuous review and iteration. If confirmed, I will review the metrics used and evaluate the health of the acquisition workforce. I will also work with the Military Services and Defense Acquisition University (DAU) to ensure training, education, certification and credentials are optimized to equip the acquisition workforce to do their part to rebuild the military and reestablish deterrence.

**Question.** Section 832 of the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act created a program for the Defense Acquisition University to implement field training support for the acquisition workforce, by which facilitators would teach rapid acquisition and commercial contracting in the context of completing a phase of an actual acquisition or sustainment program.

What is your view of the need for field training to support implementation of real-world programs as a complement to traditional school-house training provided by the Defense Acquisition University?

**Answer.** I fully support point-of-need field training in the workplace. I believe we must equip acquisition program teams to smartly use innovative acquisition practices such as the acquisition pathways and commercial solutions. The acquisition team is critical to rapidly fielding capabilities that rebuild the military and reestablish deterrence. If confirmed, I will review and make sure the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) is working with the Services to implement the DAU field training teams required by Section 832 of the FY25 NDAA.

**Question.** If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to improve the effectiveness of the training provided by the Defense Acquisition University?

**Answer.** If confirmed, I will thoroughly assess and evaluate DAU training to ensure all activities are aligned with the Secretary's priorities and to the strategic

needs of the acquisition workforce. It is my understanding that DAU has endeavored to optimize the way it develops and delivers training, as well as strengthening the relationships with the Military Services and DOD Components. The capabilities of the Defense Acquisition Workforce are vital to rebuilding the military and reestablishing deterrence, and if confirmed I will review the steps being taken to improve these capabilities.

*Question.* The Acquisition Innovation Research Center (AIRC) is intended to engage universities to support acquisition training and research, whereas the Systems Engineering Research Center (SERC) is intended to engage universities on systems engineering.

How do you view the effectiveness of the AIRC, and do you believe it is adequately focused on business problems facing the acquisition community?

*Answer.* As I understand, the AIRC is DOD's vehicle for improving the acquisition system by engaging academia through applied research and other activities to innovate acquisition policies, processes, tradecraft, education, and outcomes. If confirmed, I will review AIRC's accomplishments and ongoing activities to ensure they are focused on increasing efficiency, speed and capability fielding to help the Military Services rebuild the military and reestablish deterrence.

I also understand that AIRC is supporting OSD in implementing the ROTC-like Defense Civilian Training Corps (DCTC) program. My understanding is that this program was started under President Trump's first Administration by the former USD(A&S) and that the vision was to rigorously prepare selected college juniors and seniors to join DOD as civilians, ready with the mindset and skills needed in defense acquisition. If confirmed, I will review AIRC's work and implementation of the DCTC program.

*Question.* Do you believe the AIRC and the SERC have sufficiently different research focus to provide value?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the AIRC and SERC have sufficiently different research focus areas and engage faculty with unique backgrounds—SERC engages faculty largely from Engineering and Computer Science; and AIRC engages faculty from Business, Law, and Policy. This diversity of focus areas allows them to benefit their respective missions through synergy of research efforts. If confirmed, I will ensure that AIRC takes the lead in developing best practices across all the functional areas that will create synergistic solutions to support the DOD mission.

#### ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ENERGY, INSTALLATIONS AND ENVIRONMENT

*Question.* If confirmed, to what extent would you seek to improve the incorporation of the energy Key Performance Parameter (KPP) and incorporation of operational energy and sustainability into maintenance requirements and the acquisition system, which should also save money over the lifecycle of a weapons platform?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the integration of the Energy Key Performance Parameter (KPP) and operational energy considerations throughout requirements, acquisition, and sustainment decisionmaking and work closely with the Services to ensure our operational energy efforts are focused on enhancing the lethality and cost effectiveness of our military's operational capabilities.

#### SPACE

*Question.* As part of the creation of the Space Force, the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act created a Service Acquisition Executive (SAE) for Space to consolidate space acquisition functions in the Air Force. The fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act subsequently expanded the role of the SAE to oversee space acquisition across the "space systems and programs of the armed forces in support of the Chief of Space Operations." This was part of a series of reforms to empower the SAE for Space and the Chief of Space Operations as the Space Force achieves institutionalization of its Title 10 status.

If confirmed, will you support the SAE for Space per the duties included in the fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Acts?

*Answer.* Yes, if confirmed I will support all SAE's, including the SAE for space, in executing their duties.

The USD(A&S) co-chairs the Council on Oversight of Defense Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT) Enterprise. The major activities of the Council have been to coordinate the Military GPS User Equipment (MGUE) across the Department of Defense, given the increasingly contested electromagnetic spectrum within which DOD systems must operate.

*Question.* If confirmed, what do you see as the major issue(s) with acquiring and coordinating the installation of MGUE components across the myriad number of

DOD systems that rely on GPS signals, to include synchronization with the GPS satellites?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Military Services' acquisition organizations to review the installation of MGUE components across the Department and identify opportunities to accelerate fielding where appropriate, to include the removal of unnecessary barriers and optimization of contract structures to better incentivize vendors where possible.

#### NUCLEAR MODERNIZATION

*Question.* The USD(A&S) oversees the programs to modernize U.S. nuclear forces, most of which are decades beyond their planned service lives. Successfully executing these programs is essential to preserving a viable nuclear deterrent for the United States.

What is your understanding of the State of U.S. nuclear forces, global nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) architecture, and the supporting weapons sustainment and production capabilities within the National Nuclear Security Administration?

Answer. The Nation's nuclear forces, global NC3, and weapon sustainment and production capabilities are undergoing large-scale recapitalization, replacement, and revitalization. If confirmed, I look forward to fully reviewing the status of each of the programs to ensure that our current and future capabilities and programs provide a reliable and credible nuclear deterrent.

*Question.* Do you agree with the assessment of past Secretaries of Defense that nuclear deterrence is DOD's highest priority mission and that modernizing our Nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority?

Answer. Yes. Nuclear deterrence is the cornerstone of our national security.

*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. If confirmed, I am committed to supporting full funding for nuclear modernization and acceleration wherever possible, including additional capabilities that bolster deterrence.

*Question.* Please describe what you see as the major acquisition issues with each of the above.

Answer. Nuclear deterrence is DOD's top priority mission, and it is critical to maintain our fielded systems while simultaneously modernizing all three legs of the triad. If confirmed, I will review each of our modernization programs and understand any associated acquisition challenges to ensure our modernization programs deliver timely capability to the warfighter.

*Question.* The nuclear enterprise functions through collaboration among the Navy, the Air Force, the Joint Staff, the Offices of the Under Secretaries of Defense for Policy, Acquisition and Sustainment, and Research and Engineering, the NNSA headquarters, and the NNSA national laboratories and production plants.

Do you believe that the current system adequately connects military requirements to acquisitions and procurement to technical expertise and production?

Answer. I believe that Congress has empowered the Nuclear Weapons Council and Joint Requirements Oversight Council to coordinate in a way that improves upon the current system. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the processes and understanding options for further improvement to provide capabilities to the warfighter.

*Question.* If confirmed, do you have any recommendations for improving the functions of the complex?

Answer. If confirmed and with my colleagues on the Nuclear Weapons Council, I will review the functions of the joint enterprise and be prepared to offer recommendations as appropriate.

#### NUCLEAR WEAPONS COUNCIL

*Question.* Section 179 of title 10, designates the USD(A&S) as the Chair of the Nuclear Weapons Council.

What is your understanding of this role?

Answer. My understanding of the role of Chair of the Nuclear Weapons Council is to ensure the Council fulfills the statutory requirements set forth in Section 179 of Title 10 and ultimately to ensure that the Departments of Defense and Energy are postured to ensure a safe, secure, reliable, and effective nuclear deterrent.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure that the duties and responsibilities of the Nuclear Weapons Council are effectively executed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Nuclear Weapons Council is focused on the most critical issues facing the enterprise and will work with the Staff Director—the new Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Deterrence, Chemical, and Biological Defense Policy and Programs—to enable timely, data-driven, risk-informed decisions.

*Question.* What do you see as the primary challenges that the Nuclear Weapons Council will face over the next 4 years, and if confirmed, what steps will you take as Chair to address these challenges?

Answer. I understand that the Department of Defense and its partners at the Department of Energy face challenges as we work together to sustain fielded systems while executing modernization programs. If confirmed, I will work with all stakeholders to understand and address these challenges, ensuring that the enterprise is prepared to meet DOD requirements that can help pace the threat in an evolving security environment.

*Question.* In addition to the Department of Defense programs for modernizing U.S. nuclear forces and the NC3 system, the Nuclear Weapons Council has laid out a schedule for modernization of the nuclear weapons stockpile and the supporting National Nuclear Security Administration infrastructure.

Do you agree that modernizing the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile and supporting National Nuclear Security Administration infrastructure is a critical national security priority?

Answer. Yes, the nuclear weapons stockpile must be underpinned by responsive and resilient production capabilities and infrastructure. Delivering modern infrastructure with the capabilities and capacity necessary to support the stockpile is a critical national security priority.

*Question.* Do you support and intend to advocate for all aspects of the Nuclear Weapons Council's sustainment and modernization plan for the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile and supporting National Nuclear Security Administration infrastructure?

Answer. The nuclear weapons stockpile must be underpinned by responsive and resilient production capabilities and infrastructure. Delivering modern infrastructure with the capabilities and capacity necessary to support the stockpile is a critical national security priority. If confirmed, I will review the Nuclear Weapons Council's sustainment and modernization plan for the US nuclear weapons stockpile and supporting NNSA infrastructure and advocate for the initiatives and resourcing that supports the President's and the Secretary's priorities to ensure nuclear deterrence.

*Question.* In your opinion, are the multiple components of the DOD and NNSA nuclear modernization plans appropriately sequenced and scoped in order to meet the operational needs of the commander of U.S. Strategic Command?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, through the Nuclear Weapons Council, to understand the linkages between challenges facing the scope and schedule of the modernization programs and how those challenges translate to operational risk.

*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. Yes, if confirmed, I will commit to working closely with other members of the NWC to ensure the U.S. nuclear stockpile remains safe, secure, reliable, and effective. Overseeing and ensuring adequate funding to support these activities is a core function of the NWC and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with my colleagues to tackle these issues.

*Question.* If confirmed, how do you plan to leverage the USD(A&S)'s various roles within the nuclear enterprise to ensure the health of the specialized industrial base needed to produce certain components currently being modernized?

Answer. If confirmed, I will leverage the important roles of the USD(A&S) in stewarding aspects of the nuclear enterprise. If confirmed, I will focus on achieving robustness in the specialized and fragile industrial base and efficiency in the acquisition system to ensure timely support for the modernization of the nuclear deterrent.

*Question.* Do you support the Stockpile Stewardship Program, and have you reviewed the elements of this program as conducted by the NNSA?

Answer. I support the Stockpile Stewardship Program as a significant and successful endeavor of the National Nuclear Security Administration to ensure a safe, secure, reliable, and effective nuclear stockpile in the absence of nuclear testing. If confirmed, I will further review the program to understand its many facets.

*Question.* If the technical conclusions and data from the Stockpile Stewardship Program could no longer confidently support the annual certification of the stockpile as safe, secure, and reliable, what would be your recommendation?

*Answer.* I understand that a core function of the Nuclear Weapons Council is to provide an annual assessment of the safety, reliability, and military effectiveness of the nuclear stockpile, underpinned by independent assessments of the national security laboratory leaders and the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command. If technical conclusions and data could not support this certification, I would seek to work closely if confirmed with the laboratory leaders, the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, the Members of the Council, and the Secretaries of Defense and Energy to understand the issues and provide the President with a recommendation to remedy.

*Question.* Major construction efforts are underway at the NNSA laboratories and plants to support the re-establishment of a U.S. plutonium pit production capability at the Los Alamos National Laboratory and the Savannah River Pit Production Facility, as well as the production of uranium components at the Y-12 Plant's Uranium Processing Facility.

Please explain your understanding of each of these construction projects and your views on each relative to statutory and DOD requirements.

*Answer.* I acknowledge that the National Nuclear Security Administration's laboratories and plants are reestablishing production capabilities and capacities not exercised in the U.S. since the end of the cold war. I understand that statutory and DOD requirements are driving timelines and capacities of these capabilities, and I applaud the recent first production unit of a plutonium pit at Los Alamos National Laboratory. If confirmed, I will prioritize visiting the sites of these construction projects to understand the challenges and provide assistance and advocacy.

*Question.* The Nuclear Weapons Council works with the United Kingdom through what is known as the "U.S.—U.K. Mutual Defense Agreement."

Please explain your understanding of the importance of this agreement and its effects on DOD policies and programs. Do you support continued collaboration with the United Kingdom in the maintenance of its independent nuclear deterrent?

*Answer.* The United Kingdom is a critical ally and one that is also working to modernize its independent nuclear deterrent, heavily leveraging and reliant on U.S. information and capabilities through several agreements, including the U.S./UK Mutual Defense Agreement and Polaris Sales Agreement. I support, and, if confirmed, look forward to continuing the close collaboration and partnership with the UK through the U.S./UK Mutual Defense Agreement and through the Nuclear Weapons Council.

*Question.* What are your views on the W93 weapon program?

*Answer.* I understand that the U.S. Navy's W93/Mk7 program will provide the U.S. Navy with a modern system to meet deterrence objectives and also plays an important role in support of the United Kingdom's separate but parallel effort. If confirmed, I will prioritize gaining a comprehensive understanding of all programs associated with the modernization of our nuclear stockpile, particularly the W93/Mk7.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR NUCLEAR DETERRENCE, CHEMICAL, AND  
BIOLOGICAL DEFENSE POLICY AND PROGRAMS

*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 Policy to ensure resources, personnel, and policies are reallocated and revised to support the office of the Assistant Secretary?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will prioritize working with the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Under Secretary for Policy to implement the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act provision. Empowering this position with the resources, personnel, and policies necessary to achieve congressional direction is paramount.

GUAM

*Question.* The USD(A&S) is designated as the Senior Defense Official responsible for the development of the Integrated Air and Missile Defense of Guam system, and

co-chairs the Guam Synchronization Oversight Council (GSOC), which is charged with aligning DOD investments to support the restoration of DOD infrastructure on the island.

What is your understanding of the condition of DOD facilities on Guam?

Answer. Guam is critical to our national security and the Department must ensure the warfighters have the right infrastructure to provide credible deterrence. If confirmed, I will review the collective DOD efforts to ensure the infrastructure and facilities requirements meet the operational and support missions necessary to meet the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's requirements.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps will you take to work with your GSOC co-chair, the Under Secretary of the Navy, to accelerate efforts to reestablish Guam as an effective power projection platform in the Western Pacific?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of the Navy to execute my role as the GSOC Co-Chair assessing infrastructure requirements to meet the needs of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and helping to drive the necessary budgetary requests to support those requirements. Furthermore, if confirmed, I look forward to working with each of the Military Department's to identify roadblocks to on-going efforts and helping to find solutions which meet the needs of the Department.

*Question.* In your view, if 2027 is indeed a period of increased risk of a conflict with China as multiple commanders of Indo-Pacific Command have stated, is DOD moving at an acceptable pace for developing and deploying missile defense capabilities to Guam?

Answer. If confirmed, I will thoroughly investigate this topic and evaluate the role that A&S has had as it relates to these capabilities. President Trump has clearly communicated his desire for the Golden Dome initiative and, if confirmed, I commit to working with all Department stakeholders to review the development and deployment of missile defense capabilities to Guam at speed and scale.

*Question.* If confirmed, what adjustments, if any, would you direct to the current planning for the Integrated Air and Missile Defense of Guam?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the appropriate A&S teams to understand and evaluate existing plans and program information. From what is publicly available, it is clear the Integrated Air and Missile Defense of Guam plays a significant role in overall homeland defense. President Trump signed the Iron Dome for America executive order that directs the Department to develop Golden Dome and, if confirmed, I will work with all Department stakeholders to review our progress in accomplishing that directive.

#### MILITARY INSTALLATION RESILIENCE

*Question.* One of the principal responsibilities of the USD(A&S) is to develop and update policies, programs, and guidance, and oversee compliance within the Department to ensure resilience against the current and projected impacts of extreme weather on military installations—both in the United States and overseas. In the fiscal year 2020 NDAA, Congress amended section 2864 of title 10, United States Code, to require that Installation Master Plans include a component addressing the weather resilience of both the installation and of key supporting civilian infrastructure. Notwithstanding Congress' mandate, there does not seem to be any sense of urgency within the Department to comply, even at those installations identified as most vulnerable to impacts of extreme weather.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to increase the pace of the required revisions of Installation Master Plans to include this resilience component?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the State of military installation resilience and the current pace of revisions to Installation Master Plans to include this resilience component and determine appropriate measures to adjust that pace according to the needs of the Department.

*Question.* What steps would you take to ensure that this component of such Master Plans addresses both the resilience of the installation and the resilience of the key supporting civilian infrastructure?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review this component of such Master Plans and evaluate what steps would need to be taken to address the appropriate resilience of an installation and the key supporting civilian infrastructure.

#### RELATIONS WITH CONGRESS

*Question.* What are your views on the State of the relationship between the Office of the USD(A&S) and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

Answer. USD(A&S) and Congress share a common goal to accelerate the acquisition and sustainment of our weapon systems to rapidly deliver the most capable sys-

tems and services to our warfighters within cost and schedule limitations. This shared mission provides the basis for a strong relationship between the USD(A&S) and Congress which can and should be strengthened by prioritizing transparency, communication, and a genuine commitment to working together by pairing Congress' ability to mandate change through statute with USD(A&S) commitment to executing the mission. This complementary relationship is essential for success within the acquisition and sustainment communities.

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and the Office of the USD(A&S)?

*Answer.* Building a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and the Office of the USD(A&S) is essential to achieve the mission and implement acquisition reform. If confirmed, I would prioritize the development of that relationship by establishing a cadence of regular briefings and consultations with key congressional committees, including the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) and House Armed Services Committee (HASC), as well as relevant appropriations subcommittees. I would aim to proactively notify Congress of any significant program delays, cost overruns, or performance issues, providing detailed explanations and proposed solutions.

I intend to prioritize building personal relationships with key Members of Congress and their staff, going beyond formal hearings and briefings to engage in dialog, build trust, and understand the priorities and concerns of individual members and their constituents. I would seek opportunities to organize site visits and program demonstrations for Members of Congress and their staff to provide firsthand insights into DOD programs and technologies, and engage with Congress early in the legislative process, seeking input, sharing perspectives, and collaborating on proposed changes to acquisition laws and regulations. It is a top priority for me to work collaboratively with Congress to develop solutions that overcome the challenges facing the defense acquisition and sustainment enterprise.

#### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions would you take were you to receive or become aware of a complaint of sexual harassment, discrimination, or other harassment from an employee of the Office of the USD(A&S) or an employee of an organization over which the USD(A&S) exercises authority, direction, and control?

*Answer.* If confirmed as the USD(A&S), I would take any complaint of sexual harassment, discrimination, or other forms of harassment with the utmost seriousness. Every individual within the Office of the USD(A&S) and in organizations under its purview deserves a safe and respectful work environment. I would ensure the safety and well-being of the complainant, initiate a prompt and thorough investigation, take appropriate disciplinary action, foster a culture of prevention and respect, and seek to ensure fairness for all parties involved, prioritizing evidence-based findings to prove guilt under any investigation.

#### 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 the following with a simple yes or no.

*Answer.* Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer the following 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 the following with a simple yes or no.

*Answer.* Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer the following with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer the following 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 the following 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 the following with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

##### NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

1. Senator COTTON. Mr. Duffey, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has grown and become so cumbersome, it restricts the Department of Defense's (DOD) ability to start or finish critical projects. If confirmed, what can we do to speed up these timelines and reduce these burdensome requirements?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to review current DOD procedures and requirements, identify any unnecessary procedures that could be streamlined or eliminated, and support expedited environmental reviews where applicable. I will also work with other Federal stakeholders and Congress to maximize an effective and streamlined process.

##### U.S. NUCLEAR DETERRENT

2. Senator COTTON. Mr. Duffey, on February 25, 2025, Chairman Wicker and I wrote a classified letter to Secretary Hegseth and Secretary Wright. Will you commit to reviewing this letter and the attached documents?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes, if confirmed, I will ensure a top priority is to review this letter and the referenced documents and engage Secretary Hegseth on his response.

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR M. MICHAEL ROUNDS

##### SOFTWARE ACQUISITION PATHWAY

3. Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Duffey, as you know, the Software Acquisition Pathway (SWP) was established in December 2019 following the enactment of the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA. However, over 6 years later, DOD is still not taking full advantage of this authority. Earlier this month Secretary Hegseth issued the memo "Directing Modern Software Acquisition to Maximize Lethality" to direct all DOD components to use the SWP as the "preferred pathway for all software development" to include weapon systems programs. This is a positive development. As the memo notes, "DOD has struggled to reframe its acquisition process from a hardware-centric approach to a software-centric approach" and as a result, "it is the warfighter who pays the price." If confirmed, what specific actions would you seek to undertake in your organization to accelerate software acquisition, especially within collaborative and modular autonomous weapons systems, and fully take advantage of the more nimble and rapid development that occurs in the commercial software sector?

Mr. DUFFEY. I am familiar with and understand the importance of Secretary Hegseth's memorandum and, if confirmed, I will ensure modernizing software acqui-

sition is a top priority. I believe that, over the last few years, the Department has made considerable progress in adopting modern software practices, but we must accelerate the scaling and transformation of our workforce, processes, tools, and culture.

4. Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Duffey, if confirmed, you would be tasked with developing and submitting an implementation plan for this effort. How will you seek to partner with industry, specifically in our Nation's technology hub—Silicon Valley—to fully “leverage the entire commercial ecosystem for defense systems” as the memo requires?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will execute the Secretary's directive on modern software acquisition by fostering competition and expanding opportunities for non-traditional contractors. I will work to ensure our acquisition and contracting approaches lower barriers to entry, enable faster and more flexible solicitation approaches, and speed up access to non-traditional players and cutting-edge tech for our Warfighters.

#### ELECTRONIC FAULTS TECHNOLOGY

5. Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Duffey, almost 3 years ago the Department of Defense estimated that the inability to detect and isolate electronic faults in weapon systems resulted in over 383,000 non-mission capable days each year and over \$5.5 billion in non-value-added sustainment costs. In response to this readiness and sustainment challenge, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) proposed funding for the purchase of a readily available, effective, and proven technology to address this issue. The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) fully supports this technology, and the fiscal year 2024 defense appropriation included \$35.2 million for it. My concern is that under the previous administration, the Army has, instead of acquiring this readily available, proven, and extremely cost-effective technology despite its powerful support from OSD and SASC, decided to continue to only study the issue. Meanwhile, the Navy has outright resisted acquisition of the technology. If confirmed, would you commit to following up with me on this technology?

Mr. DUFFEY. It is critical that the Department address sustainment issues through innovative solutions. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of the Army to understand the results of the study and commit to following up with you on technology solutions for electronic faults. Additionally, if confirmed, I will work with the ASD(Sustainment) and the Services to address this and other key sustainment issues.

6. Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Duffey, are you aware that essential DOD capabilities rely on use of the lower-3 band?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes.

7. Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Duffey, if confirmed, will you commit to defending the DOD's access to and unimpeded use of this portion of the electromagnetic spectrum?

Mr. DUFFEY. I understand the importance of this spectrum to our military and to achieving the objectives of the President and the Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving further briefings on this topic and will work to ensure the Department has the spectrum access necessary to achieve national security and homeland defense objectives.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JONI K. ERNST

##### SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION RESEARCH PROGRAM-SMALL BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER PROGRAMS

8. Senator ERNST. Mr. Duffey, the Department of Defense allocates more than \$2 billion dollars each year for small business research, development, and commercialization of new technologies. I recently introduced S. 853, the INNOVATE Act, which would reform the SBIR-STTR programs to eliminate small business welfare and help scale the best battle-ready technologies for deployment with the warfighter. How will you work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (R&E) to ensure that the most promising SBIR funded technologies are properly analyzed for integration into programs of record?

I understand the Office of the USD(A&S) manages the Rapid Integrated Scalable Enterprise (RISE) program, which fields innovative technologies from Phase II SBIR/STTR into military systems and programs of record. If confirmed, I would also review all of the authorities under the Office of the USD(A&S) and work with the

USD(R&E) on courses of action to properly transition innovative technologies into the hands of the Warfighter.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

ALASKA SPECIFIC ISSUES

9. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, in our discussion in my office we spoke about the need for additional hangar and infrastructure capability at Deadhorse (near Prudhoe Bay) to help extend the Air Force's reach in the Arctic. The U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) Commander, General Gregory Guillot, as well as the U.S. Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) Commander, General Kevin Schneider have both expressed interest in this location. Will you work with me, if confirmed, to get the military construction approved to support operations out of Deadhorse?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of the Air Force, Northern Command, and Congress to ensure infrastructure investments—including military construction—are prioritized to ensure mission success in the Arctic.

10. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, as part of President Trump's Golden Dome program, there will almost certainly be a need to ensure that our advanced early warning radar systems like the E-7 are capable of detecting incoming aircraft and missile threats both at home and if necessary, forward deployed. We have had a number of issues in Alaska with E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) readiness rates due to aging airframes and parts. Will you commit to reviewing the E-7 program to make sure we are properly resourcing it and work with me to ensure that we have that capability on hand when required in Alaska?

Mr. DUFFEY. It is my understanding that the E-3 AWACS low readiness rate is one of the primary reasons it is being replaced by the E-7 Wedgetail aircraft. If confirmed, I commit to working with Congress to ensure that capability is available when needed in Alaska.

AERIAL REFUELING

11. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, what role do you think unmanned aerial refueling (like the Navy's MQ-25 Stingray) will play in the future of air combat?

Mr. DUFFEY. It is my understanding that the MQ-25 Stingray will enhance Carrier Air Wing warfighting capabilities. As we develop Collaborative Combat Aircraft, we will likely see other opportunities to assess and potentially expand on unmanned aerial refueling capabilities. If confirmed, I look forward to a briefing on unmanned aerial refueling and working with the Department leadership to determine appropriate levels of manned and unmanned platforms.

F-47 FIGHTER PROGRAM

12. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, as you are aware the F-47 program was awarded recently to Boeing. While I have no doubt that Boeing was chosen because it had the best aircraft prototype, I'd like to know how you plan to hold contractors (including Boeing) accountable for any failures or delays in this program given its recent history with the KC-46 which is ongoing?

Mr. DUFFEY. The F-47 will serve an important role in the Next Generation Air Dominance Family of Systems and will provide the warfighting capabilities necessary to continue U.S. dominance in the air domain well into the future. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Air Force to ensure that the program has the acquisition support required to execute its acquisition plans.

13. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, what do you think we learned from these previous programs that we should do differently with the F-47?

Mr. DUFFEY. The Air Force's acquisition approach for F-47 leverages the lessons from recent acquisition programs, which resulted in the development of a foundational digital infrastructure. The open architecture represents a leap forward in defense acquisition and will provide benefits throughout the life of the program. If confirmed, I will work with the Air Force Service Acquisition Executive to ensure the Air Force is leveraging all relevant acquisition authorities to execute the program.

SMALL BUSINESS ACT 8(A) CONTRACTOR

14. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, in our meeting, you mentioned the need to thoroughly review our existing contracts and contract vehicles to ensure they are

providing the best benefit to the taxpayer. The Small Business Act (SBA) 8(a) program, created by Congress, provides a contract vehicle through which sole source and set aside contracts can be awarded to small businesses owned by Alaska Native corporations, Community Development Corporations, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations. These corporations are tied to political relationships, not racial classifications. They also are some of our most efficient contractors, earning stellar Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) marks. Last many of these small businesses employ veterans at rates far exceeding the national average, allowing our Nation's finest to continue to serve after they take off the uniform. Will you commit to me to work to preserve and strengthen 8(a) contracting for the Department of the Defense and the Air Force?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing 8(a) contracting and prioritizing programs under this contracting authority that support and strengthen national defense and Warfighter readiness.

15. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, I recently toured an SBA 8(a) contracting operation and saw firsthand the value 8(a) brings to the Federal customer in terms of cost and efficiency while delivering mission-critical solutions that increase our national security and warfighter readiness. When the rate for big government contractors is double 8(a) shops and about 45 days for 8(a) contractors versus 3 months for big government contractors, and 8(a) shops give the intellectual property (IP) to the Government unlike big government contractors—would you agree that the SBA 8(a) program one of the most efficient and effective ways to deliver results to the Federal Government?

Mr. DUFFEY. I am aware of the SBA's 8(a) program and that the Department has multiple programs that have successfully connected with 8(a) firms to bring their speed and innovation into the industrial base. To the extent those firms deliver accelerated capability to the warfighter, I would agree that the 8(a) program is a valuable contracting tool for the Department of Defense.

#### ALASKA ENERGY ISSUES

16. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, on January 20, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14153 entitled "Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential" which mentions the Department of Defense in multiple places in multiple places.

Section 3(b)(xxiii) directs the Secretary of Interior to "identify and assess, in collaboration with the Secretary of Defense, the authorities and public and private resources necessary to immediately achieve the development and export of energy resources from Alaska—including but not limited to the long-term viability of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System and the associated Federal right-of-way as an energy corridor of critical national importance—to advance the Nation's domestic and regional energy dominance, and submit that assessment to the President."

Section 3(d) says "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."

How do you intend to work with the Secretary to implement these policies and how do you view Alaska natural resource development, including development of the vast trove of critical minerals in Alaska, as a national strategic priority?

Mr. DUFFEY. Alaska offers abundant resources to support our energy dominance. If confirmed, I will work with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works and other appropriate officials within the Department to ensure rapid and thorough implementation of the President's direction in Executive Order 14153.

17. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, the Alaska LNG [liquefied natural gas] Project, a proposed 800-mile natural gas pipeline to transport natural gas from the Alaska North Slope to the Kenai Peninsula for the purposes of in-State energy security and the export of LNG to our Asian allies is a priority of the President of the United States. Executive Order 14153 entitled "Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential" in section 2 policy states, "It is the policy of the United States to . . . prioritize the development of Alaska's liquefied natural gas (LNG) potential, including the sale and transportation of Alaskan LNG to other regions of the United States and allied nations within the Pacific region."

Section 3(ii)(a) of President Trump's Executive Order 14153 entitled "Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential" directs "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 (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."

Furthermore, in President Trump's March 4, 2025, Address to a Joint Session of Congress he stated "My administration is also working on a gigantic natural gas pipeline in Alaska, among the largest in the world, where Japan, South Korea and other nations want to be our partner with investments of trillions of dollars each. It's never been anything like that one. It will be truly spectacular. It's all set to go."

How do you see the Department of Defense's interest and role in this project?

Mr. DUFFEY. I believe DOD's interest and role is to ensure a thorough evaluation of energy resilience at our installations in Alaska and the Indo Pacific region and ensure the inclusion of liquified natural gas is evaluated as part of these actions. If confirmed, I will also thoroughly investigate the requirements and permitting of the proposed pipeline and export infrastructure and support timely implementation of the President's direction.

18. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, how do you see your role as Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment in implementing the Presidents executive orders on Alaskan energy?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, my role would be to assemble a team of subject matter experts on energy, installation, and environmental issues from across the Department, determine the best courses of action to meet the energy requirements of our armed forces, and recommend actions for efficient and effective implementation of the President's direction.

19. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, President Trump's January 20, 2025 order declaring a National Energy Emergency which directs in section 2 to utilize the authorities afforded under the Defense Production Act "to facilitate the identification, leasing, siting, production, transportation, refining, and generation of domestic energy resources, including, but not limited to, on Federal lands." and in section 7 states "(a) In collaboration with the Secretaries of Interior and Energy, the Secretary of Defense shall conduct an assessment of the Department of Defense's ability to acquire and transport the energy, electricity, or fuels needed to protect the Homeland and to conduct operations abroad, and, within 60 days, shall submit this assessment to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. This assessment shall identify specific vulnerabilities, including, but not limited to, potentially insufficient transportation and refining infrastructure across the Nation, with a focus on such vulnerabilities within the Northeast and West Coast regions of the United States. The assessment shall also identify and recommend the requisite authorities and resources to remedy such vulnerabilities, consistent with applicable law."

In Alaska, shortages in natural gas supplies in the Cook Inlet are affecting heating and energy usage in Southcentral Alaska—the most populated area in Alaska and home to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) which hosts the 673d Air Base Wing, the headquarters for the U.S. Alaskan Command, 11th Air Force, 11th Airborne Division, and the Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Command Region.

In late January 2024, temperatures dropped to record low temperatures (around -20°F) in the Anchorage area coinciding with failures of two of five of the wells at the Cook Inlet Natural Gas Storage (CINGSA) Facility reducing gas deliverability to local utilities and led to directing local users, including Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), to lower thermostats to conserve gas consumption. The Alaska LNG project is designed to provide these bases with gas and is in the process of providing it for utilities in Fairbanks and Southcentral Alaska.

Do you see the national security interest in seeing that natural gas from the Alaska LNG project is made available to Alaska's military bases and recognize the Alaska LNG project as being of strategic national importance for our military?

Mr. DUFFEY. I understand the Alaska LNG project has the potential to alleviate Cook Inlet's natural gas vulnerabilities and bolster energy independence. The reli-

able energy supply to JBBER and other Alaskan military installations is critical to national security, given their strategic location and missions.

20. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, will you commit to pursuing agreements, pursuant to the President's Executive Order, to power Alaska's military bases?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department utilizes all available authorities, including evaluating liquified natural gas, to enhance infrastructure resilience and energy security. I will work with OSD and the Department of Energy to identify opportunities to streamline processes and expedite solutions.

21. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, one possible option to help see the Alaska LNG project to completion that is both in the interest of the Department and the President's broader objective of unleashing Alaska's energy potential is the Department of Defense reserving the capacity in the pipeline. The Department could then have the prerogative of offloading this capacity to Alaskan utilities resulting in no cost to the Department or it could maintain rights to the fuel in the event of a national emergency. An early commitment from the Department to reserve capacity in the pipeline would enable an accelerated timeline for securing private financing the project at the lowest possible cost of capital. Do you recognize the positive impact this course of action would have on meeting the intention of Executive Order 14153 and fulfilling the Department's obligations under it?

Mr. DUFFEY. I recognize the potential benefits of leveraging DOD involvement to de-risk the project, attract private investment, and potentially secure fuel for national emergencies. If confirmed, I will ensure a thorough evaluation of its cost-effectiveness, alignment with the Department's needs and strategy, impact on Alaskan utilities, legal implications, market viability, and environmental consequences.

22. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, will you work with me, the State of Alaska and the project's lead developer to fully explore this option and if advisable, and at all possible execute it?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to working with you, Alaska, and the developer to fully explore this option and, if advisable and feasible, work toward its execution.

23. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, forward deployed U.S. Forces at bases in Japan and Korea depend on the national power grids to operate. The Department, therefore, has a direct interest in the security of Japanese and Korean energy. Do you see how Alaska LNG shipped to our allies, through sea lanes with no choke points or obstructions, and with the implicit protection of the U.S. Navy, can contribute to the security and safety of our own bases in Japan and South Korea in furtherance of their mission to deter adversaries in the region, including China and North Korea?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will work across OSD and with the Department of Energy to ensure we thoroughly explore and, where it is in our national interest, support the export of Alaskan LNG energy to assure the energy resilience and safety of bases in Japan and Korea and across the entire Indo-Pacific region.

#### DEFENSE ACQUISITION AND PROCUREMENT

24. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, in a recent Readiness Subcommittee Hearing on Joint Force Posture, I asked each of the services' vice chiefs about budget flexibility and carryover funding authority to provide each service with the ability to shift a certain percentage of funds among capabilities each year. Do you think that the services would benefit from such budget flexibility and how do you think it should best be implemented?

Mr. DUFFEY. I believe the Department should work with Congress to ensure program managers and Department officials have the flexibility and authority, to potentially include budget flexibility and carryover funding authority, to react to emerging technological opportunities, reallocate resources as needed, and accelerate the transition of critical technologies to rapidly address warfighter needs.

25. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, as you probably know, software-defined and autonomous systems are vital to U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander, Admiral Samuel Paparo's hellscape concept of operations (CONOP). And while not a panacea for a potential conflict with China, Admiral Paparo recently stated, "Unmanned systems [are] our force multiplier" and they "multiply [our] combat power, without multiplying our manning requirements." Specifically, he emphasized that "we have to build these capabilities at scale . . ." During his nomination hearing, newly con-

firmed Deputy Secretary of Defense Stephen Feinberg agreed stating, “Clearly, we need to develop autonomy. Autonomy in significant numbers with a centralized command . . . Additionally, while we continue to heavily invest in new autonomous capabilities, we also have hundreds—if not thousands—of legacy systems, some in service and others in the boneyard, that could be upgraded with 21st Century software.”

In your personal opinions, in order to fully “scale” autonomous and software-defined capabilities “in significant numbers” to the warfighter, what approach should DOD take in retrofitting—or “jailbreaking”—legacy systems (that already exist in large numbers) with cutting-edge autonomous software capabilities?

Mr. DUFFEY. The development and deployment of autonomous platforms will significantly alter the landscape of future conflicts, particularly conflict with technologically advanced adversaries. As the Department works to scale our current manned fighter platforms with autonomous unmanned systems, I believe it is important to ensure autonomy can be trusted to safely operate an aircraft, particularly through the challenging maneuvers inherent in future fight. As we integrate artificial intelligence into existing air platforms, I believe we should work to leverage the platform data already available and identify ways to accelerate the collection and use of that data to build autonomous algorithms to support future unmanned systems and retrofit legacy systems. If confirmed, I will work with Department leadership to determine the appropriate level of manned versus unmanned systems needed to defeat our adversaries.

26. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, given the existing contractual limitations, what authorities or contractual changes would your teams need to execute these retrofits and unlock the latent capabilities already resident, but sadly dormant in our existing warfighting hardware?

Mr. DUFFEY. I agree with Deputy Secretary Feinberg that the Department should always seek opportunities for modernization such as those presented by unmanned autonomous capabilities. If confirmed, I will review existing contracts to consider whether there are potential contractual changes that could unlock capabilities within legacy systems.

27. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, last year, Congress received the report of the Commission on Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) Reform—a comprehensive report that outlined issues with the Department of Defense’s defense acquisition system. I plan to lead efforts to cut bureaucracy and speed up innovation in the Pentagon and defense technology sector and I believe the recommendations in this report are a crucial step in doing so. Many of the reforms in that report do not need congressional legislation to execute but rather can be enacted by the Department of Defense and you, if confirmed. Will you commit to review the findings of that report and direct a Pentagon working group to begin implementation of the reform measures it outlined?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will review and pursue the most promising opportunities to rapidly implement PPBE Commission report recommendations that improve resourcing flexibility and accelerate acquisition. I believe the acquisition cycle must be far shorter than those of our legacy systems, and we must prioritize resource allocation against the most significant threat. This will require the Department to modernize how it manages the integration of requirements, budgeting, and acquisition process, aligning incentives to deliver results.

28. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, I am working with the Pentagon and through legislation to lead efforts that help innovative defense startups avoid the “Valley of Death” which results in long-procurement timelines and shuttered defense firms. Will you commit to work with me to fix this issue and to get feedback from non-traditional defense technology leaders and scholars to reform the Pentagon’s processes?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I commit to collaborate with Congress and this committee, as well as other stakeholders, to take actions that address the “Valley of Death.” I believe it is paramount for the Department to access new and emerging technologies from innovative defense startups and connect those promising solutions with warfighting needs, enabling more rapid delivery of capabilities.

29. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Duffey, will you commit to reviewing the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) as outlined in the PPBE Reform Commission report and provide Congress with updates as to the regulations that need to be removed or amended to speed up acquisition?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will review the DFARS and assess options to remove or amend regulatory requirements that preclude the Department from meeting

warfighting capability needs at the speed that is necessary to deter or defeat our adversaries. I will also commit to working with this Administration's legislative process to identify statutory requirements that are the basis for DFARS language which could be repealed or amended to enable the Department to speed up acquisition.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

HYPERSONICS

30. Senator BUDD. Mr. Duffey, how concerned are you regarding China's hypersonic capabilities and, if confirmed, what should the organizations you have been nominated to lead, do to ensure sufficient emphasis is placed on and the proper resources are put toward the development of critical systems and supporting technologies that would help lower the costs and accelerate the fielding of the Department's offensive and defensive hypersonic programs of record, including those that would support Golden Dome?

Mr. DUFFEY. I am deeply concerned about China's rapid advancement in hypersonic capabilities. If confirmed, I will work to ensure America restores our technological edge in these critical capabilities. Additionally, I will commit to working to ensure the appropriate emphasis, to include sufficient funding and appropriate authorities, is placed on the development of the Nation's offensive and defensive hypersonic capabilities and accelerate fielding of these capabilities for many mission areas, to include the Golden Dome for America Integrated Air and Missile Defense systems.

31. Senator BUDD. Mr. Duffey, if confirmed, are you committed to working with this committee to ramp up the Department's efforts in critical hypersonic systems and supporting technologies to compete with China?

Mr. DUFFEY. I am fully committed to working closely with this committee to accelerate the Department's efforts in hypersonic systems and supporting technologies. I believe open communication and collaboration with Congress are essential for ensuring we have the resources and strategic direction necessary to maintain our competitive edge against China in this critical area. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with you on this vital issue and welcome your insights and guidance.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACK REED

DEFENSE CONTRACTS

32. Senator REED. Mr. Duffey, do you agree that it is hard to signal to industry that DOD is a consistent customer when the current administration is indiscriminately canceling contracts with little or no explanation?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I intend to actively engage with defense industry senior executives who are responsible to develop and produce the defense capabilities our warfighters require. I also intend to review the Department's programs to ensure that we are sending a consistent and stable demand signal to industry that is focused on maximizing the lethality of the warfighter.

33. Senator REED. Mr. Duffey, do you commit to providing this committee a full accounting of the contracts canceled for convenience since the beginning of this administration, including any associated fees or contracts costs as a result of canceling for convenience (versus canceling for cause, or simply not renewing contract options)?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I intend to review contract cancellations and commit to open and transparent communication with the Committee regarding all contract terminations

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

COMPLIANCE WITH SUBPOENAS

34. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Duffey, in your response to both the advance policy questions (APQ) and the initial questions from Chairman Wicker, you agreed that, if confirmed, you will "appear and testify before this Committee when requested". Despite your current assurances, this is not the position you took during your tenure in the first Trump administration. To the contrary, you actively refused to com-

ply with congressional subpoenas. Why should this Committee believe your assurances that you will comply and appear before this Committee?

Mr. DUFFEY. I will appear and testify before the Committee and the Congress when requested.

#### APEX ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

35. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Duffey, the APEX Accelerator Program is housed in the Department's Office of Small Business Programs. New York is home four APEX Accelerators in Rochester, Utica, Manhattan, and Queens, bringing roughly \$5.7 billion value in contracts and subcontracts to New York's defense industrial base. Could you speak to the value of the APEX Accelerator Program and your plans and vision for the program?

Mr. DUFFEY. It is my understanding that the APEX Accelerator program brings tremendous value to the government, our Nation's Warfighters, and our national security. If confirmed, I will work with the Office of Small Business Programs to review the APEX Accelerator program and support efforts to mitigate barriers to entry, increase competition, and innovation in the industrial base.

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

##### ACQUISITION REFORM TO SUPPORT FOR U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

36. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Duffey, reforming acquisition practices to support forward-deployed forces in the region is critical to deterrence and readiness in the Indo-Pacific. However, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) provided Congress with \$11 billion dollars in unfunded priorities in fiscal year 2025. How will you align acquisition and sustainment strategies with the unique operational needs of Indo-Pacific Forces, particularly those stationed in Hawaii and operating from Pacific Island chains?

Mr. DUFFEY. Secretary Hegseth has established deterring aggression in the Indo-Pacific as a top priority of the Department. Modernizing the Department's acquisition and sustainment practices is key to achieving this goal. If confirmed, I will work with the Combatant Commanders and the Military Services to review existing acquisition and sustainment strategies in the Indo-Pacific and ensure these strategies are enabling the Department to field and sustain forward deployed forces in a contested environment. Additionally, if confirmed, I will ensure that existing bilateral and multilateral logistics and sustainment forums result in mutually beneficial Joint and Combined Force access to critical sustainment capabilities while increasing ally and partner burden sharing and strengthening the U.S. defense industrial base.

37. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Duffey, given the need to respond quickly to evolving threats while safeguarding public funds, what specific reforms would you pursue to balance rapid fielding of new systems with strong oversight and accountability?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will act swiftly to leverage the full range of authorities provided by Congress to enable rapid fielding of new systems. I also commit to examining the effectiveness of existing statutory authorities, and to working with this committee and the Congress to recommend any additional reforms that might be necessary. At the same time, I will continue to be mindful that the Department's efforts to acquire systems more rapidly do not restrict oversight or accountability.

38. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Duffey, how do you plan to incentivize the use of commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) solutions to meet immediate DOD's needs while maintaining flexibility for future upgrades?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will emphasize the importance of diligent and detailed market research to ensure DOD's understanding of the marketplace to maximize the use of COTS solutions. I believe the Department needs to consider flexible, adaptable, and maintainable systems from the start to maintain competition and source upgrades in the future. Excellent systems engineering and design is a key enabler and will be one of my focus areas. In addition, I will emphasize the importance of defining requirements in terms that balance flexibility to maximize industry innovation with appropriate specificity to accurately represent the needs of the warfighter.

##### SMALL BUSINESSES AND CYBERSECURITY MATURITY MODEL CERTIFICATION

39. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Duffey, small businesses with DOD contracts are struggling under the cost burden and complex processes of the Cybersecurity Maturity

Model Certification (CMMC) implementation. Even DOD recognizes that implementation can cost up to \$100,000. I recognize that it is important to address cybersecurity threats, but we risk many small businesses going out of business because of the extremely high costs of the cybersecurity certification process. How will you address the cost burden of this process on small businesses?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will review the procurement process and CMMC implementation to minimize costs and incentivize small businesses to meet the cybersecurity requirements.

40. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Duffey, I am also concerned about feedback we have heard that in the Department's attempts to cut costs, there is consideration of gutting the Office of Small Business Programs, which includes the long-standing funding to help small businesses, like Project Spectrum and the APEX Accelerators. What do you see as the role or benefit of the Office of Small Business Programs, and how do they help small businesses navigate the cyber certification processes?

Mr. DUFFEY. It is my understanding that the Office of Small Business Programs is essential to maximizing small business contributions to the defense industrial base. These businesses offer great value in rebuilding the industrial base, re-establishing deterrence, and modernizing acquisition processes, and I intend to prioritize balancing our need to incentivize cybersecurity protections in industry while minimizing the cost to do so.

41. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Duffey, do you commit to working with my office on addressing these challenges and supporting our small businesses in this process?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes, if confirmed I would commit to working with your office on addressing these challenges and supporting small business contributions to our national security.

#### DEMAND SIGNALS TO DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

42. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Duffey, the Department of Defense has a poor track record of effectively communicating demand signals to the defense industrial base, which makes strategic planning a challenge, especially for small businesses. How will you coordinate to improve communication to the defense industrial base, particularly to small businesses, about the Department's needs, planned investments, and business opportunities?

Mr. DUFFEY. In my view, the Department should be communicating clear and sustained demand signals to the defense industrial base in order to ensure that the DIB can support DOD's warfighting needs. These demand signals can be in the form of multi-year procurements, strategy-driven outreach efforts, forum-driven outreach efforts, and more. Overall, the DOD can improve communication of demand signals through strengthening internal coordination within the DOD, sharing long-term strategic priorities, and enhancing forecasting.

#### ACQUISITION REFORM

43. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Duffey, the FORGED Act calls for numerous reforms to the defense acquisition system. Included in these reforms is the repeal of the roles and responsibilities of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, as well as the Service Acquisition Executives (section 101(a)(7)). Do you support this change?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will work with the SAEs, my staff, and this committee to understand all implications of the proposed reform and what policies might be enacted to achieve the intent of the proposed legislation. I commit to engaging with Congress on any implications of the language.

44. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Duffey, if this legislation were enacted, what impact would it have on your ability to serve as the USD(A&S) without clear statutory direction regarding your roles and responsibilities?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will work closely with the SAEs and this committee to address the pending legislation to offer my recommendations.

#### ACQUISITION WORKFORCE

45. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Duffey, Secretary Hegseth has committed to a strategic reduction in the DOD workforce of 5–8 percent, or approximately 50,000–60,000 employees. While the Defense Department's acquisition budgets have grown significantly in recent years, senior DOD officials have reported that there are not enough contracting officers to manage the increasing workload and large programs. Given the direction from the Secretary to cut the DOD's workforce across all components,

how will you ensure that acquisition programs remain on schedule while reducing the acquisition workforce?

Mr. DUFFEY. I believe contracting officers are a force-multiplier in delivering and sustaining lethal capabilities to the warfighter and driving efficiency for the American taxpayer. As part of the multi-functional acquisition team, contracting professionals, engineers, logisticians, testers, program managers, and a host of others serve as business advisors and work with program managers to drive optimal cost, schedule, and contractor performance in providing timely delivery of requirements needed by the warfighter. While the Department's contract spend has increased in recent years, the DOD workforce continues to demonstrate resilience and dedication in supporting and executing major acquisition programs, and we must continue to attract, grow, and retain a capable workforce. If confirmed, I will direct the Defense Acquisition University to review and, if necessary, update training to the acquisition workforce and determine if any additional authorities are needed for the acquisition workforce to be successful.

46. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Duffey, furthermore, how will you manage employee retention, development, and recruitment given the high expected increase in workload?

Mr. DUFFEY. Retaining and developing a highly skilled acquisition workforce is critical to achieving the Secretary of Defense's priority to rebuild the military. If confirmed, I will focus on targeted retention initiatives to keep experienced professionals engaged and motivated. I will also ensure critical and necessary investment in professional development to upskill our acquisition workforce and ensure they are prepared for evolving acquisition challenges. Additionally, I will work with the A&S team to refine our recruitment strategies to attract top talent, including leveraging hiring authorities and programs to bring in personnel with critical skills.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

ETHICS

47. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

48. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed, will you commit to not engaging in any lobbying activities, including unregistered "shadow" or "behind-the-scenes" lobbying under the guise of consulting or advising on DOD-related matters, focused on DOD or any of its components for 4 years after leaving DOD?

Mr. DUFFEY. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

49. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. Not that I recall.

50. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. Not that I recall.

51. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. Not applicable.

52. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. No.

53. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. No.

54. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. No.

55. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you own any defense contractor stock, will you divest it to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest?

Mr. DUFFEY. I will comply with all Department and legal ethical requirements.

56. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, will you commit not to retaliate, including by denying access to DOD officials or facilities, against news outlets or individual journalists who publish articles that are critical of you, your office, DOD, or the Trump administration?

Mr. DUFFEY. I will follow Department public affairs guidance on all media engagement.

57. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, how many times have you been accused of sexually harassing, assaulting, or creating a hostile work environment for another individual in a personal or professional capacity? Provide a list of all instances in which you have been accused of sexually harassing, assaulting, or creating a hostile work environment for an individual and the behavior of which you were accused.

Mr. DUFFEY. None.

58. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, have you requested, or has anyone requested on your behalf, that any other person or third party sign a nondisclosure, confidentiality, non-disparagement, or similar agreement regarding your conduct in a personal or professional capacity?

Mr. DUFFEY. No.

59. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, will you voluntarily release any individual from any such agreements before your nomination hearing?

Mr. DUFFEY. Not applicable.

60. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, have you ever paid or promised to pay, or has anyone paid or promised to pay on your behalf, an individual as part of any non-disclosure, confidentiality, non-disparagement, or similar agreement?

Mr. DUFFEY. No.

61. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if the answer to the question above was yes, how much was promised, how much was paid, and what were the circumstances?

Mr. DUFFEY. Not applicable.

62. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, will you commit to recuse yourself from all particular matters involving your former clients and employers for at least 4 years?

Mr. DUFFEY. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing

rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

63. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, will you commit to not seeking employment, board membership with, or another form of compensation from a company that you regulated or otherwise interacted with while in government, for at least 4 years after leaving office?

Mr. DUFFEY. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

64. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, would it ever be appropriate to threaten or imply that you would withhold future contracts from a company if they filed a complaint, bid protest, or cooperated with an Inspector General, civil, or criminal investigation?

Mr. DUFFEY. I will follow law and Department policy regarding protests.

65. Senator WARREN. Dr. Meink, have you ever threatened or implied that you would withhold future contracts from a company if they filed a complaint, bid protest, or cooperated with an inspector general or other investigation?

No, and I'm unaware of any investigation.

66. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you think it is valuable to encourage competition and innovation in the defense industrial base?

Mr. DUFFEY. We must deepen our understanding of the strengths and vulnerabilities within our defense industrial base and seek to revitalize through re-industrialization, increased investment, flexible contracting, enhanced workforce recruitment and training, and increased competition. I believe it is essential to encourage competition and innovation in the defense industrial base. Competition and innovation play an important role in the defense industrial base and are critical to the Department. Competition drives innovation, leading to more advanced and capable systems for our warfighters, while simultaneously helping to control costs. If confirmed, I will prioritize policies that encourage competition and reduce barriers to entry for new and innovative companies. If confirmed, I will continue to reduce barriers to market entry to make the best innovations available to the Department.

#### CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT AND TRANSPARENCY

67. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what is your understanding of the role of the Department of Defense Inspector General and service Inspectors General?

Mr. DUFFEY. It is my understanding that the role of the Department of Defense Inspectors General is to conduct independent audits and investigations relating to DOD's programs and operations to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness and to prevent and detect fraud and abuse.

68. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. Yes.

69. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will work to comply with Inspector General requests in a timely manner. I would defer to the Office of the Inspector General to update members of the Committee regarding the progress of the Inspector General's ongoing reviews.

70. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed, will you commit to refusing to follow illegal orders from any individual, including the President?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will follow the law and the Constitution of the United States.

71. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what actions would you take if you were given an illegal order from any individual, including the President?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I would have a duty not to carry out a manifestly unlawful order.

72. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, will you commit to testify or provide a deposition if you are called upon by Congress to provide a deposition voluntarily?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes.

73. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, will you commit to testify or provide a deposition to Congress if you are issued a subpoena to testify?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes.

74. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, will you commit to providing information or documents to Congress voluntarily if you are requested to do so?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes.

75. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, will you provide information or documents to Congress if you are issued a subpoena?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes.

76. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. Yes.

77. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if confirmed, will you commit to posting your official calendar monthly?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will commit to transparency consistent with the law and Department policy regarding disclosure of sensitive information.

78. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you think DOD has an overclassification problem? If so, please provide this committee with an estimate of the number or percentage of documents that will be under your purview that are overclassified.

Mr. DUFFEY. It is my understanding that overclassification persists at the Department, though the exact extent of overclassification is not well understood at this time. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(I&S) to support investment in tools to assist in accurate classification—like machine learning and AI—which have shown promise in reducing human error and should be further employed to improve the classification, marking, and declassification of the Department's sensitive information.

79. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, to the best of your knowledge, is your service or component identifying records for proactive posting in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act? If not, please describe how you would ensure that they do so to comply with public records law.

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will review Acquisition & Sustainment (A&S) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) business processes to ensure compliance with applicable legal requirements.

80. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if confirmed, do you think your department should pursue strategic technology to support automated declassification?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will commit to working with my colleagues in OUSD(I&S) and across the Department to review existing processes and determine steps necessary to explore the possibility of automated declassification.

81. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, why did you refuse to answer the subpoena that the House issued you after the December 2019 impeachment of the President?

Mr. DUFFEY. I complied with guidance and direction from White House Counsel and the Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel.

## PROJECT 2025

82. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. I have not discussed Project 2025 with the Trump campaign, the Trump transition team, or other members of the Trump administration in the past year.

83. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. As part of my role in preparing for a potential transition, I discussed multiple national security reform proposals with Heritage Foundation officials.

84. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, the Project 2025 chapter to which you contributed states that the Office of Federal Procurement Policy “should be engaged early and often in OMB’s [Office of Management and Budget] effort to drive policy, including by obtaining transparency about entities that are awarded Federal contracts and grants and by using Government contracts to push back against woke policies in corporate America.” As Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)), would your priority be using Government contracts to advance U.S. national security and support our servicemembers or to police the personnel and human resources (HR) decisions of defense contractors?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will prioritize ensuring government contracts deliver the best value to the Department and the American taxpayer.

## ACQUISITION

85. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, how do you plan to use your role to influence the “woke” policies in corporate America?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will prioritize ensuring industry partners deliver the best value to the Department and the American taxpayer.

86. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, which policies do you plan to target?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will promote policies that ensure partners deliver the best value to the Department and the American taxpayer.

87. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed as USD(A&S), what standards will you follow to determine which programs are “outdated or underperforming”?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will work with my counterparts in the Combatant Commands, the Joint Staff, and on the Joint Requirements Oversight Council to review program requirements and determine if they are still relevant for national security. I will also conduct an assessment of programs with requirements that are no longer relevant to national security and identify programs that cannot meet current requirements or are experiencing high-cost overruns and severe delays.

88. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what guardrails will you put in place to prevent undue influence from defense contractors in determining which programs are outdated or underperforming?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will comply with legal requirements and Department policy to ensure determinations are made without undue influence and use objective cost, schedule, and performance data.

89. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you support Project 2025’s recommendation to create a “Night Court” and “terminate outdated or underperforming programs”?

Mr. DUFFEY. I support ensuring the Department’s entire portfolio of programs meets or exceeds performance expectations and provides the greatest capability to our men and women in uniform.

90. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if so, how will you approach this process to ensure that decisions are fair, transparent, and non-political?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that any decisions to terminate “outdated” or “underperforming” programs are fair, transparent, non-political, and consistent with Secretary Hegseth’s priority to rebuild our military by matching threats to capabilities.

91. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you support “reducing the number of procurement competitions”? If you do, why?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will partner with my colleagues across the Department to achieve an optimal balance between open competition and streamlined acquisition processes. I believe that the decision of whether to reduce the number of procurement competitions should be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the specific circumstances, risks, and potential benefits of each approach. I strongly support streamlining and accelerating the acquisition process.

92. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, how do you think reducing competition impacts the quality of the products and weapons systems that DOD uses?

Mr. DUFFEY. A competitive and diverse defense industrial base is vital to the Department’s ability to fulfill its mission. In my opinion, healthy competition produces better quality, pricing, innovation, and access to technical data and intellectual property rights, whereas in most cases reduced competition can lead to lower quality, limited innovation, and higher prices that can hinder the research and development of critical defense technologies and adversely impact the cost, schedule, or performance of defense acquisition programs.

93. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you agree that “[t]he critical shortage of trained and certified acquisition personnel must be addressed with urgency in order to support DOD mission objectives and goals?”

Mr. DUFFEY. A well-trained, certified, and experienced acquisition workforce is fundamental to executing DOD’s mission effectively. Addressing key acquisition and sustainment roles is imperative, and, if confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that we take decisive action to build and sustain a strong talent pipeline.

94. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if so, how do you plan to address this shortage if you are confirmed as USD(A&S)?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will evaluate the workforce’s capacity and capability to ensure the Department has the right mix of acquisition professionals with the necessary expertise to support the warfighter. I will commit to strengthening recruitment and retention efforts, particularly in areas where we face skill gaps. Additionally, I will prioritize an acquisition workforce capable of using innovative practices across the full spectrum of the acquisition and sustainment lifecycle and ensure acquisition professionals have clear career development pathways.

#### NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MISSILE DEFENSE

95. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you support “[a]ccelerat[ing] the development and production of the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile?”

Mr. DUFFEY. Nuclear deterrence remains the DOD’s top priority mission, and I fully support modernization of the nuclear triad. If confirmed, I will review the Sentinel program status following last year’s critical Nunn-McCurdy breach and will support opportunities, where possible, to accelerate the development and production of the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile program.

96. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if so, why do you support a program with an 81 percent cost overrun?

Mr. DUFFEY. ICBMs serve as the triad’s most responsive leg, and the Sentinel program remains a critical component of the nuclear modernization Program of Record and our national security. If confirmed, I will have an opportunity as the Milestone Decision Authority to regularly review the program and will work closely with the Air Force to control cost and deliver timely capability to the warfighter.

97. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what is your understanding of the significance of a Nunn-McCurdy breach?

Mr. DUFFEY. I understand that a critical Nunn-McCurdy breach represents a juncture for an acquisition program that requires a series of activities to determine whether it is in the national interest to continue the program. If certified to continue, the program must address root causes and implement corrective actions. The Department of Defense must ensure that we are acting as responsible stewards of taxpayer resources.

98. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what do you understand your role to be in ensuring that programs do not reach this significant cost overrun threshold if you are confirmed?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed as the Under Secretary for Acquisition and Sustainment, my role as the Defense Acquisition Executive and Milestone Decision Authority for certain programs is to provide direction to and oversight of acquisition programs. This responsibility requires careful balance and deep understanding of cost, schedule, and performance risks and mitigation opportunities. Preventing cost overrun hinges on realistic program baselines and, if confirmed, I will work with the SAEs to provide proper guidance and oversight in their acquisition programs.

99. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you support “[r]eject[ing] any congressional proposals that would further extend the service lives of U.S. capabilities such as the Minuteman III (MMIII) intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM)?”

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I would collaborate closely with the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Air Force to understand the technical and operational risks associated with further extension of today’s systems if modernized systems were not available to field on schedule.

100. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if so, why do you support this despite DOD providing testimony that the “Air Force, with the support of Congress, continue investments to ensure sustainment of MMIII to manage end-of-life margin until it is fully replaced by a modern ICBM weapon system”?

Mr. DUFFEY. I support ensuring that the United States maintains a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. While the Department is committed to the modernization of the Nation’s nuclear forces, continued sustainment of fielded systems is imperative to avoiding a deterrence shortfall and to mitigate risk during the transition to modernized systems.

101. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you agree with any of these statements: (1) “all U.S. nuclear capabilities and the infrastructure on which they rely date from the cold war and are in dire need of replacement,” (2) “Missile defense has been underprioritized and underfunded in recent years,” or (3) “[t]he United States manifestly needs to modernize, adapt, and expand its nuclear arsenal?” If so, specify which ones.

Mr. DUFFEY. I agree with each of these three statements and, if confirmed, will gain a deeper understanding of nuclear capabilities and infrastructure, missile defense, and the current and planned capabilities of the nuclear arsenal.

102. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, how much funding will be needed to update nuclear capabilities? Please provide a dollar amount.

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing our nuclear modernization programs and fully understanding the total costs associated with modernizing the Nation’s nuclear capabilities.

103. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you support expanding the U.S. nuclear arsenal? If so, please specify with which weapons.

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the current and planned capabilities of the U.S. nuclear arsenal as the Chair of the Nuclear Weapons Council to ensure the United States continues to deter aggression from our adversaries and defend the Homeland.

104. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, which systems in the U.S. nuclear arsenal do you consider out of date?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the current and planned capabilities of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and identifying those programs that require modernization.

105. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, how do you think increasing our nuclear weapons spending will impact our adversaries’ interest in doing the same?

Mr. DUFFEY. Our adversaries have already committed to and demonstrated increased spending on nuclear weapons, independent of the U.S. levels of funding.

106. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, which conventional weapons should be cut to pay for nuclear modernization or missile defense systems?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I intend to review nuclear and conventional weapons programs to ensure the Department addresses gaps in warfighting capability, and develops and produces the right capabilities, in both type and capacity, to meet requirements to defend the Homeland and deter adversaries. If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring the warfighter has the necessary capabilities to meet those requirements.

## FOREIGN INFLUENCE

107. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, have you received any payment from a foreign government or entity controlled by a foreign government within the past 5 years?  
Mr. DUFFEY. No.

108. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, have you communicated with any foreign government or entity controlled by a foreign government within the past 5 years?  
Mr. DUFFEY. No.

109. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. None.

## RETALIATION AND PROTECTING WHISTLEBLOWERS

110. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. I do.

111. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, have you ever retaliated against any individual for coming forward about an illegal order, sexual assault or harassment, negligence, misconduct, or any other concern that they wish to raise?  
Mr. DUFFEY. No.

112. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed, will you commit to protecting whistleblowers? If so, please specify how you will do so.

Mr. DUFFEY. I will comply with law and Department policy regarding whistleblower protection.

## IMPOUNDMENT CONTROL ACT

113. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, on January 27, 2025, President Trump's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memo calling for the suspension all Federal financial assistance programs (excluding "assistance provided directly to individuals"). Do you agree with OMB's decision to issue this memo?

Mr. DUFFEY. 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. That said, I am not aware of the how this memorandum would impact DOD. If confirmed, I will review the memo and work to implement the President's direction.

114. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you believe the Secretary of Defense has the legal authority to block the disbursement of funds appropriated by Congress?

Mr. DUFFEY. 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.

115. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what is your understanding of the Impoundment Control Act (ICA)?

Mr. DUFFEY. 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.

116. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you commit to following the Impoundment Control Act?

Mr. DUFFEY. 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.

117. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. 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 advice the administration's legal positions and from the Department's General Counsel's office.

118. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. 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.

119. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. 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.

120. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, 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. DUFFEY. 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.

121. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you commit to expending the money that Congress appropriates and authorizes?

Mr. DUFFEY. I commit to being a good steward of taxpayer funds, as I have always been in my decades of public service, and will comply with all applicable laws regarding the obligation and expenditure of appropriations to the Department of the Air Force.

122. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you commit to following and implementing every provision of the annual National Defense Authorization Act passed into law?

Mr. DUFFEY. 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 advice the administration's legal positions and from the Department's General Counsel's office.

123. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you support addressing the risks of blast overpressure to servicemembers through the swift implementation of sections 721 through section 725 of the Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA?

Mr. DUFFEY. I am committed to prioritizing the health and safety of our service members. If confirmed, I look forward to working with officials from across the Department to review sections 721 and 725 of the FY2025 NDAA and to better understand and address the risks of blast overpressure to servicemembers.

## RIGHT-TO-REPAIR

124. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you believe giving DOD access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could advance DOD's readiness?

Mr. DUFFEY. I believe the Department should procure the necessary data and associated rights to enable repair of its own equipment. If confirmed, I will direct a review of the Department's internal policies regarding the acquisition of technical data rights, and the impact on readiness.

125. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you believe giving DOD access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could help reduce DOD's repair and sustainment costs?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will direct a review of the Department's internal policies regarding the acquisition of technical data rights, and the impact on repair and sustainment costs.

126. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, how will you ensure servicemembers in your service or component, who are stationed abroad, can timely and cost-effectively repair equipment when needed, especially in a contested logistics environment?

Mr. DUFFEY. The ability to quickly and cost-effectively repair, maintain, and overhaul equipment is essential to reestablishing deterrence. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department's acquisition and sustainment strategies strengthen the U.S. defense industrial base, utilize innovative solutions like advanced manufacturing, and leverage co-sustainment opportunities with allies and partners closer to the point of need, to ensure our ability to operate in contested logistics environments.

127. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed, will you commit to including right-to-repair/technical data rights clauses in acquisition contracts that your service or component enters into?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I am committed to carefully reviewing the Department's current policies and practices regarding right-to-repair and technical data rights within acquisition contracts. I will explore 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.

128. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed, will you commit to ensuring contractors deliver technical data rights to your service or component when their contract requires or allows it?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I commit to understanding the obstacles defense program personnel are facing in enforcing data rights already negotiated in contracts and review the existing processes and procedures for remedy.

129. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed, will you commit to conducting an assessment of the cost of not having the right-to-repair/technical data rights for your service's or component's equipment, the results of which you would make public for review by Congress and the Department of Government Efficiency?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will review the Department's current policies and practices regarding right-to-repair and technical data rights under acquisition contracts and work with Congress toward balancing the need to control costs and enhance competition while promoting a healthy defense industrial base to support the warfighter.

## ACQUISITION REFORM

130. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, the FORGED Act calls for numerous reforms to the defense acquisition system. Included in these reforms, is the repeal of the roles and responsibilities of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, as well as the Service Acquisition Executives (Sec. 101(a)(7)). Do you support this change?

Mr. DUFFEY. I agree with and support many of the reforms proposals within the FORGED Act. If confirmed, I look forward to assessing the impacts of all provisions of the proposed legislation on the Department's ability to accelerate acquisition and will work closely with the SAEs and this committee to address these proposed reforms and to offer my recommendations on any statute changes.

131. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if this legislation were enacted, what impact would it have on your ability to serve as the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisi-

tion and Sustainment without clear statutory direction regarding your roles and responsibilities?

Mr. DUFFEY. I agree with and support many of the reform proposals within the FORGED Act. If confirmed, I look forward to assessing the impacts of all provisions of the proposed legislation on the Department's ability to accelerate acquisition and will work closely with the SAEs and this committee to address these proposed reforms and to offer my recommendations on any statute changes.

132. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what is your understanding of the Procurement Integrity Act and your obligations under that law?

Mr. DUFFEY. My understanding of the Procurement Integrity Act is that, as a government official, I am obligated to protect competitive source selection information from unauthorized disclosure. Safeguarding this sensitive information is essential to maintaining the integrity of the procurement process and ensures all prospective contractors have the fair opportunity to compete for Federal contracts. I understand the Procurement Integrity Act also restricts former Government officials from accepting compensation from contractors under certain conditions.

133. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you believe that it is important to be able to assess accurate cost and pricing data from contractors, especially for sole-or single-source contracts?

Mr. DUFFEY. I believe that competition is the preferred way to obtain fair and reasonable pricing. In instances where competition is not available, the Truthful Cost and Pricing Data Act provides access to information that places the Government and the contractor on an equal footing as it relates to facts that could significantly affect the negotiation of contract price. If confirmed, I will work with Department stakeholders and the acquisition workforce to ensure the Department has access to accurate cost and pricing data as required by law.

134. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, how do you plan to obtain cost and pricing data from contractors to determine that the cost of DOD contracts is fair and reasonable?

Mr. DUFFEY. As long as existing statutory requirement for cost and pricing data remains in place, the Government has authority to obtain certified cost and pricing data from contractors unless an exception applies. A notable exception to the Truthful Cost and Pricing Data Act is competition, which will always be my preference, and I will encourage competition to the maximum extent I can.

135. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, how do you plan to do so in cases where contractors refuse or claim they are unable to turn over this data?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I look forward to working with our contracting and acquisition subject matter experts to understand and, where necessary, apply the tools and authorities at our disposal to ensure contractor compliance with legal and contractual requirements.

136. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that contractors are not price gouging or overcharging DOD?

Mr. DUFFEY. It is my understanding the Department takes a proactive approach to safeguarding against price gouging through several initiatives, including fostering competition, obtaining and analyzing data in sole source situations, and working with the Congress on legislative initiatives. When circumstances warrant, it is my understanding that the Department also uses reverse engineering to seek new sources and obtain the benefits of competition. If confirmed, I will work to review and, where beneficial to the Department, expand our efforts in these areas.

137. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed will you commit to seeking refunds from contractors and companies that overcharge DOD?

Mr. DUFFEY. Yes. I am committed to sound financial management of the resources authorized and appropriated to the Department of Defense, to include seeking refunds when funds are otherwise not recoverable through the terms and conditions of the contract.

138. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if so, how do you plan to do so?

Mr. DUFFEY. It is my understanding that the Department has established guidance for the workforce to seek voluntary refunds from contractors when overpayments or otherwise inappropriate payments are not recoverable through the terms and conditions of the contract. If confirmed, I will support our contracting officers

in instances where voluntary refunds are the most appropriate tool for recovering funds in defense of the taxpayer.

139. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do you believe there is excessive consolidation in the defense industry?

Mr. DUFFEY. I am concerned that there has been significant consolidation in the defense industry over the past few decades that restrict competition.

140. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if so, what do you believe to be the ramifications of that consolidation?

Mr. DUFFEY. In my view, the ramifications of consolidation include reduced competition (which can mean higher prices), less innovation, and a lack of incentive to improve efficiencies. Additionally, consolidation can lead to supply chain issues as only a small number of organizations maintain all the supply chains needed to maintain the DIB. To increase innovation and burden sharing, we need to explore options to expand capability and capacity across both traditional and non-traditional vendors.

141. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed, how will you support competition in the defense industry?

Mr. DUFFEY. I believe that the Department must prioritize fostering a competitive defense industrial base. Competition is crucial for innovation, affordability, resilience, and our ability to produce critical capabilities at speed and scale. If confirmed, I believe we should work to incentivize private sector investments to increase production capacity from existing vendors and new entrants. We can leverage existing tools such as SBIR/STTR programs and authorities like OTAs and other streamlined acquisition processes, and consider expanding them to reach a wider range of innovators, streamline regulations and provide more accessible information about defense needs. Addressing barriers to entry for smaller businesses, promoting open architectures, and investing in workforce development will ensure we have a robust industrial base with the skilled workforce necessary to support the warfighter's needs.

142. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what do you understand to be the role of independent cost estimates in the acquisition process?

Mr. DUFFEY. Independent Cost Estimates (ICE) are an important tool for planning, budgeting, market research, program baseline and should cost analyses, cost realism in competitive acquisitions, and many other activities throughout the lifecycle of the program. They can also be useful in comparing sole source proposals to what the Government expected to pay based upon independent data sources.

143. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, how should DOD establish program schedules and milestones?

Mr. DUFFEY. Program schedules and milestones will be unique to each acquisition programs. If confirmed, I will ensure the acquisition workforce has the training and experience needed to determine the best and most appropriate acquisition approach for programs, as well as robust technical planning and credible baselines. Additionally, I will work with the SAEs to ensure programs are moving at speed and scale so warfighters have the capabilities they need to deter conflict and defeat our adversaries.

144. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, would it be appropriate for DOD to establish program schedules to achieve partisan electoral outcomes?

Mr. DUFFEY. The DOD should align acquisition program schedules to prioritize the rapid delivery and sustainment of preeminent capabilities to support our warfighters and promote our national security interests at home and abroad.

145. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, should DOD acquisition decisions be influenced by partisan political activities?

Mr. DUFFEY. The acquisition program decisions must prioritize the rapid delivery and sustainment of preeminent capabilities to support our warfighters and promote our national security interests at home and abroad.

146. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, should DOD acquisition decisions be influenced by individuals with conflicts of interest that involve DOD?

Mr. DUFFEY. DOD acquisition program decisions must prioritize the rapid delivery and sustainment of preeminent capabilities to support our warfighters and promote our national security interests at home and abroad.

## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

147. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, does DOD benefit from partnering with colleges, universities, nonprofits, and federally funded research and development centers?

Mr. DUFFEY. Partnerships with academic institutions, nonprofits, and federally Funded Research and Development Centers provide the Department with access to cutting-edge research, innovative technologies, and subject matter expertise. These partnerships provide vital research, innovation, and expertise that strengthen DOD capabilities and acquisition strategies. If confirmed, I will partner with these institutions to support the innovation needs of the A&S community and the Department as a whole.

148. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, under your leadership, will DOD continue to work with colleges, universities, nonprofits, and federally funded research and development centers to research and address our toughest national security challenges?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I am committed to continuing these partnerships to drive innovation and ensure our technological edge. These institutions have played a critical role in helping us develop emerging technologies, improve acquisition methodologies, and address strategic threats. I am committed to leveraging all partnerships, including these key organizations, to accelerate innovation and ensure we deliver the best capabilities to our warfighters.

149. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, on March 20, 2025, DOD announced it was terminating \$360 million in grants. What is your understanding of DOD's criteria for canceling grants?

Mr. DUFFEY. I understand the Department is reinvesting in critical mission needs through the review of identified programs, contracts, and grants. If confirmed, I will work with Department leadership to determine any potential impact to the acquisition and sustainment community.

150. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what should DOD's criteria for canceling grants be?

Mr. DUFFEY. I understand Secretary Hegseth's desire to focus Department spending on mission critical needs. If confirmed, I will work closely with the USD(R&E) to better understand the existing criteria for canceling grants, identify opportunities for change, and promote transparent and justifiable outcomes.

151. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, who should be involved in decisions to cancel DOD grants?

Mr. DUFFEY. Decisions to cancel DOD grants are complex and should involve key stakeholders and the General Counsel to ensure legal compliance and fair, transparent, and justifiable outcomes. If confirmed, I will work with the relevant Department stakeholders to determine impact to the OUSD(A&S).

152. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, does DOD invest enough in research and development?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I commit to working with Secretary Hegseth, the Comptroller and the Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering to recommend the President's budget include a sufficient investment in research and development.

153. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, do defense contractors invest enough in research and development?

Mr. DUFFEY. While defense contractors make significant R&D investments, fostering a collaborative environment between government, industry, and academia is crucial to ensure sufficient investment aligned with long-term national security needs. Current contractor R&D efforts demonstrate strengths in certain areas, but opportunities exist for improvement and strategic redirection to address emerging threats and technological gaps.

154. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what should DOD's top research and development priorities be?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will partner with the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering to shape and prioritize the Department's research and development investments, balancing near-term needs with long-term vision and fo-

cusing on both disruptive innovation and the maturation of critical existing technologies.

## UKRAINE AID

155. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, when did you first learn, during President Trump's first term, that he wanted to freeze aid to Ukraine?

Mr. DUFFEY. June 19th, 2019

156. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, when did you first learn that President Trump wished to withhold this aid in order to pressure Ukraine into investigating President Biden and his son?

Mr. DUFFEY. This was not communicated to me.

157. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, in what manner did you learn this information? Please include any details on whom you learned this information from as well as whether this was during a verbal conversation, phone call, email, or otherwise.

Mr. DUFFEY. Not applicable.

158. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, did you instruct an OMB official on July 25 to insert "a footnote into the budget document that prohibited the Pentagon from spending any of the aid until Aug. 5"?

Mr. DUFFEY. I do not recall the precise details or timing, but I did direct the footnote to withhold the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative funding.

159. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, why did the Trump administration take the "very unusual step" of removing the career OMB official's authority to oversee the aid freeze?

Mr. DUFFEY. It is the discretion of the President and the Director to delegate the apportionment authority to the official he or she sees fit.

160. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, why did you decide to freeze this aid, despite concerns that this would violate the ICA?

Mr. DUFFEY. All funds were spent and the programmatic delay caused by the hold did not violate the ICA.

161. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, please provide unredacted copies of any emails, correspondence, or other materials related to the freezing of aid to Ukraine.

MR. DUFFEY. THOSE MATERIALS ARE NOT IN MY POSSESSION.

162. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, have you been approached by any Russians, or any other foreign countries, including for business opportunities, since 2016?

Mr. DUFFEY. No.

163. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, please disclose any foreign contacts you have had since 2016.

Mr. DUFFEY. My foreign contacts are listed, as required, on my SF-86.

164. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, when do you think it is appropriate to not spend money that is authorized or appropriated by Congress?

Mr. DUFFEY. The executive branch is tasked with executing congressional direction in the most efficient way possible.

165. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, as a political appointee, what do you understand your role to be in seeking and listening to the advice of career civil servants?

Mr. DUFFEY. Career civil servants provide continuity and technical expertise in advising political appointees.

166. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed as USD(A&S), do you commit to enacting the laws set by Congress?

Mr. DUFFEY. I do.

167. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, if you are confirmed as USD(A&S), do you commit to upholding and following the Constitution, including ensuring that the President must "take care that the laws be faithfully executed"?

Mr. DUFFEY. I do.

168. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what is your understanding of the authority of lawmaking power that the Constitution vests to Congress?

Mr. DUFFEY. The Constitution vests the Congress with power to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution all Powers vested by the Constitution.

PROTECTING CLASSIFIED INFORMATION AND FEDERAL RECORDS

169. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what is your understanding of the need to protect operational security, or OPSEC?

Mr. DUFFEY. Operational Security is practiced to deny adversaries the opportunity for an advantage over U.S. forces. Proper OPSEC protects critical information and the mission and the men and women executing it.

170. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what are the national security risks of improperly disclosing classified information?

Mr. DUFFEY. It is generally accepted that the improper or unauthorized disclosure of classified information could be expected to cause identifiable or describable damage to national security. The describable damage and certainty of that damage would depend on the details of the information released, including the level of classification, as well as the extent and nature of the disclosure. Determining the extent of damage to national security is part of the unauthorized disclosure process as outlined in DOD policy, and I would defer to the Department for additional specifics.

171. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, is it your opinion that information about imminent military targets is generally sensitive information that needs to be protected?

Mr. DUFFEY. The Department has robust policies and processes dedicated to determining the sensitivity of information related to military targets. If confirmed, I will ensure that myself and those under my organizational control will adhere to those processes and standards.

172. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what would you do if you learned an official had improperly disclosed classified information?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I would report any such incident, or suspected incident, to the appropriate security office.

173. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, what is your understanding of Government officials' duties under the Federal Records Act?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will adhere to the Federal Records Act and the applicable DOD policies that implement it, which ensure that the Federal records I create or receive are appropriately maintained.

174. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, should classified information be shared on unclassified commercial systems?

Mr. DUFFEY. As per the DOD's Information Security Program, only computers and IT systems approved and accredited for Classified National Security Information may be used for classified communications.

175. Senator WARREN. Mr. Duffey, is it damaging to national security if the pilots flying a mission find out that the official who ordered them to perform that mission shared sensitive information that could have made it more likely that the mission would fail or they would be killed?

Mr. DUFFEY. The Department of Defense places the utmost importance on mission success and the safety of the men and women carrying out the mission, making it the finest fighting force in the world. If confirmed, I will endeavor to carry on that tradition of excellence supporting the men and women of the armed forces in my role as the USD(A&S).

176. Mr. Duffey, if you had information about the status of specific targets, weapons being used, and timing for imminent U.S. strikes against an adversary, under what circumstances would you feel comfortable receiving or sharing that information on an unclassified commercial application like Signal?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I commit to adhering to the information security policies of the Department of Defense.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARK KELLY

## INNOVATION AND MODERNIZATION EFFORTS

177. Senator KELLY. Mr. Duffey, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is our pacing threat, they've made incredible technological leaps in hypersonic capabilities. While the Department has made progress, it is lagging behind, and this is just one example of PRC technological investment. We face delays and program management problems across the Department. What steps will you take to ensure the Department maintains technological overmatch?

Mr. DUFFEY. Streamlining acquisition program timelines and utilizing existing flexible procurement authorities is critical to accelerate development. The faster we can test, deploy, and scale production of critical technologies, the more rapidly we will restore our technological advantage. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering and the Military Departments to prioritize these investments and ensure our continued overmatch.

178. Senator KELLY. Mr. Duffey, how will you direct the Department to foster innovation across broad ecosystems to deliver new technology to the field and present rapidly deployable technological solutions?

Mr. DUFFEY. Streamlining acquisition program timelines and utilizing existing flexible procurement authorities is critical to foster innovation and accelerate development. The faster we can test, deploy, and scale production of critical technologies, the more rapidly we will restore our technological advantage. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering, the Defense Innovation Unit, and the Military Departments to prioritize these investments and ensure our continued overmatch.

## DOMESTIC PRODUCTION OF CRITICAL MINERALS

179. Senator KELLY. Mr. Duffey, despite cobalt playing an essential role in critical defense technologies, the United States does not process cobalt domestically at a commercial scale. The United States imports nearly 100 percent of our cobalt sulfate and cobalt metal requirements, leaving the U.S. cobalt supply chain vulnerable. Meanwhile, China produces more than 70 percent of the world's refined cobalt. It is important that the Department of Defense bolster efforts to substantially domesticate and expeditiously de-risk our critical mineral supply chain from China. To that end, given the national security importance of building a domestic critical mineral supply chain, can I get your commitment that, if confirmed as the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment, you will work to support American cobalt processing companies?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will review our supply chain vulnerabilities am committed to working across the government to bolster domestic critical mineral production, including cobalt, where needed to reduce our reliance on foreign sources and strengthen national security.

180. Senator KELLY. Mr. Duffey, additionally, on March 20, 2025, President Trump released an Executive Order entitled "Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production". However, due to an Executive Order on March 14, 2025, rescinding multiple Defense Production Act Presidential Determinations, many pending Defense Industrial Base Consortium (DIBC) grants are on hold until further notice, leaving in limbo all previously recommended awards for U.S. critical mineral projects, including those for cobalt. Can I get your commitment that, if confirmed, you will support reinstating the DIBC awards for Critical Mineral Projects in the United States, or support their expedited consideration for new programs?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will assess the impact of the rescinded Presidential Determinations on DIBC grants for critical mineral projects and determine the appropriate next steps to support domestic critical mineral capabilities.

## SEMICONDUCTOR INNOVATION AND INTEGRATION INTO DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT SYSTEMS

181. Senator KELLY. Mr. Duffey, as you both know, DOD has struggled to utilize commercial leading-edge semiconductors in DOD acquisition programs because the pace of innovation moves faster than our procurement process. In recent years, and with the support of this Committee, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has carried out several programs to address this program, including the Rapid Assured Microelectronics Prototypes—Commercial (RAMP-C) program, the State-of-the-Art Heterogeneous Integrated Packaging (SHIP) program, and the Joint

University Microelectronics Program (JUMP). How would you access the success of these programs?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I look forward to working across the DOD and with other agencies to review and assess the successes of RAMP-C, SHIP, and JUMP, specifically focusing on RAMP-C's rapid prototyping of secure microelectronics, SHIP's advancements in heterogeneous integration for more powerful chips, and JUMP's fostering of university-government research collaborations. I commit to supporting these programs where they can directly improve our ability to accelerate adoption of advanced microelectronics into our weapon systems.

182. Senator KELLY. Mr. Duffey, what are the next steps R&E and DARPA should be taking to build upon the success of these research and development programs and integrate their funding into DOD procurement processes?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(R&E) to assess the progress of these R&D programs and identify ways to transition successful technologies into fielding state-of-the-art semiconductors that support critical warfighting platforms.

183. Senator KELLY. Mr. Duffey, what lessons should A&S learn from R&E's work to find ways to integrate leading-edge commercial microelectronics at scale into DOD programs of record?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with R&E to identify best practices and lessons learned from their efforts to integrate leading-edge commercial microelectronics into programs of record.

184. Senator KELLY. Mr. Duffey, how will you ensure A&S works closely with commercial partners in the semiconductor industry to ensure leading-edge microchips can be integrated into DOD's acquisition process, while maintaining appropriate safeguards?

Mr. DUFFEY. If confirmed, I look forward to building strong, collaborative partnerships with commercial semiconductor companies and exploring opportunities for streamlining the secure integration of leading-edge microchips into DOD programs.

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[The nomination reference of Mr. Michael P. Duffey follows:]

**NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT**

**PN17**

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,  
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,  
January 28, 2025.

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

Michael Duffey, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, vice William A. LaPlante, Jr., 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. Michael P. Duffey, which was transmitted to the Committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

**Mr. Michael P. Duffey****Education:**

- The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania
  - Executive Education Certificate – Scaling a Business (Oct – Dec 2022)
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
  - Executive Education, Entrepreneurship Development Program Certificate (Jan 2011)
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
  - Bachelor of Science in Political Science (Sep 1996 – Dec 2001)
- Marquette University High School
  - High School Diploma (Sep 1992 – May 1996)

**Employment Record:**

- Office of the Secretary of Defense, US Department of Defense
  - Deputy Chief of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Jan 2025 – Present)
- Equinox Global Solutions, LLC (Washington, D.C.)
  - Founding Partner (Mar 2021 – Jan 2025)
- White House Office of Management & Budget
  - Program Associate Director for National Security Programs (May 2019 – Jan 2021)
- US Department of Defense
  - Deputy Chief of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Nov 2018 – May 2019)
  - Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering (Feb 2018 – Nov 2018)
  - Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for White House Liaison (Jan 2018 – Feb 2018)
- Office of Presidential Personnel, The White House (Washington, D.C.)
  - Associate Director (Jul 2017 – Jan 2018)
- President-Elect Transition (Washington, D.C.)
  - DoD Landing Team Lead for Acquisition, Technology & Logistics (Nov 2016 – Jan 2017)

- Republican Party of Wisconsin (Madison, WI)
  - Executive Director (Jul 2015 – Nov 2016)
- US Department of Defense
  - Deputy Director, Data and Systems Analysis (Mar 2009 – Jun 2015)
- John McCain for President
  - Wisconsin State Director (Jun 2008 – Nov 2008)
- US Department of Defense
  - AT&L Team Chief, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs (Feb 2008 – Jun 2008)
  - Special Assistant to the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Technology (Apr 2006 – Feb 2008)
  - Special Assistant to the White House Liaison (Jan 2005 – Apr 2006)
- Bush Cheney 2004
  - Southeastern Wisconsin Field Director (Jan 2004 – Nov 2004)
- US Department of Health & Human Services
  - Special Assistant to the White House Liaison (Mar 2003 – Dec 2003)
- White House Office of Political Affairs
  - Intern (Jan 2002 – May 2002)

**Honors and Awards:**

- Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service (May 2019)
- Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service (Jan 2021)

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[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. Michael P. Duffey in connection with his nomination follows:]

119<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, 2025 -- 2026  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
ROOM SR-228  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-6050  
(202) 224-3871

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES QUESTIONNAIRE  
INFORMATION REQUESTED OF CIVILIAN NOMINEES

**INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE:** Answer all questions and provide all requested information. If more space is needed, attach an additional sheet of paper to the Questionnaire and cite the part of the Questionnaire and the question number (e.g., A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies. Unless otherwise required, an answer of "yes", "no", or "not applicable" is appropriate.

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART A

**NOTE:** Information furnished in this part of the Questionnaire will be made available in Committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearing, if any, and will be entered in the hearing record, also available to the public.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC

1. **Name (Include any former names you have used):**  
Michael Patrick Duffey
2. **Position to which nominated:**  
Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Sustainment
3. **Date of nomination:**  
January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025
4. **Education (List names of secondary and higher education institution attended, type of school [vocational, technical, trade school, college, university, military college, correspondence, distance, extension, and on-line], dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted):**
  - Marquette University High School: Diploma, May 1996 (Attended Sept 1992 - May 1996)

- University of Wisconsin-Madison: Bachelor of Science in Political Science, December 2001 (Attended Sep 1996 - Dec 2001)
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology: Executive Education, Entrepreneurship Development Program Certificate, Jan 2011 (Attended Jan 2011)
- The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania: Online Executive Education Certificate - Scaling a Business, Dec 2022 (Attended Oct 2022 - Dec 2022)

**5. Employment record (List all jobs held since college, or in the last 10 years, whichever is less, including the title or description of the job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment. If the employment activity was military duty, show each change of military duty station as a separate period of employment):**

- Deputy Chief of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, US Department of Defense (Jan 2025 – present, Washington, DC)
- DoD Transition Lead, Presidential Transition Team (Dec 2024 – Jan 2025, Washington, DC)
- Founding Partner, Equinox Global Solutions, LLC (Mar 2021 – Jan 2025, Washington, DC)
- Program Associate Director for National Security Programs, White House Office of Management & Budget (May 2019 – Jan 2021, Washington, DC)
- Deputy Chief of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, US Department of Defense (Nov 2018 – May 2019, Washington, DC)
- Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary of Defense for Research & Engineering, US Department of Defense (Feb 2018 – Nov 2018, Washington, DC)
- Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for White House Liaison, US Department of Defense (Jan 2017 – Feb 2018, Washington, DC)
- Associate Director, Office of Presidential Personnel, The White House (Jul 2017 – Jan 2018, Washington, DC)
- DoD Landing Team Lead for Acquisition, Technology & Logistics, President-Elect Transition (Nov 2016 – Jan 2017, Washington, DC)
- Executive Director, Republican Party of Wisconsin (Jul 2015 – Nov 2016, Madison, WI)
- Deputy Director, Data and Systems Analysis, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology & Logistics, US Department of Defense (Mar 2009 – Jun 2015)

**6. Have you ever received approval, pursuant to section 908 of title 37, United States Code, to accept civil employment (and compensation for that employment), payment for speeches, travel, meals, lodging, registration fees, or a non-cash award from a foreign government?**

No.

**7. Government experience (List any advisory, consultative, honorary, and other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed in response to question 5, above):**

- AT&L Team Chief, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, US Department of Defense (Feb 2008 – Jun 2008, Washington, DC)
- Special Assistant to the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition & Technology, US Department of Defense (Apr 2006 – Feb 2008, Washington, DC)
- Special Assistant to the White House Liaison, US Department of Defense (Jan 2005 – Apr 2008, Washington, DC)
- Special Assistant to the White House Liaison, US Department of Health & Human Services

(Mar 2003 – Dec 2003, Washington, DC)

- Intern, White House Office of Political Affairs (Jan 2002 – May 2002, Washington, DC)
- Intern, Office of Senate Majority Leader Mary Panzer (2000-2001, Madison, WI)
- Intern, Office of State Assemblyman Dean Kaufert, Wisconsin State Assembly (1999-2000, Madison, WI)
- Intern, Office of State Assemblyman Scott Walker (1998-1999, Madison, WI)

- 8. Business relationships (List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, and of any educational or other institution):**
- Chairman, Alexandria Classical Christian Academy (ACCA) Board of Trustees, January 2023 - present
  - Treasurer, United Coalition for Advanced Nuclear Power (UCAN Power) Board of Directors, 2023 - 2025
- 9. Memberships (List all memberships and offices that you currently hold, as well as any memberships and offices you have previously held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable and other organizations):**
- Capitol Hill Club Corporate Membership
- 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:**
- Volunteered for the Republican Party of Wisconsin Election Day Operations, November 2024
- c. Itemize all individual political contributions of \$100 or more to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity during the past 5 years. List each individual contribution (not the total amount contributed to the person or entity) over this period:**
- Scott Fitzgerald for Congress, \$250 – 12/13/2021
  - Scott Fitzgerald for Congress, \$1,000 – 6/29/2022
  - Nick LaLota, \$500 – 6/29/2022

- Scott Fitzgerald for Congress, \$500 – 5/9/2024
  - Scott Fitzgerald for Congress, \$500 – 5/19/2024
  - Cole for Congress, \$1,500 – 6/6/2024
  - Mike Waltz, \$1,000 – 6/24/2024
  - Tim Sheehy for Montana, \$1,000 – 7/23/2024
  - Trump National Committee JFC, \$3,300 – 9/22/2024
  - Never Surrender, Inc., \$2,970 – 9/22/2024
  - Trump 47 Committee, Inc., \$516.53 – 10/9/2024
  - Never Surrender, Inc., \$330 – 10/9/2024
11. **Honors and awards (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements):**  
Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service (May 2019, Jan 2021)
12. **Published writings (List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, or other published materials that you have written or for which you served as co-author or editor, including articles and blogs published on the internet):**  
None.
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).**  
None.

**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?**  
Yes.
15. **Do you agree, if confirmed, to provide this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such**

witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so timely?

Yes.

16. Do you agree, if confirmed, to consult with this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you?

Yes.

17. Do you agree, if confirmed, to keep this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided?

Yes.

18. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this Committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request?

Yes.

19. Do you agree, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this Committee?

Yes.

20. Do you agree, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress?

Yes.

#### FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS

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?

Not Applicable.

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 have no plans to pursue external employment.

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[The nominee responded to Parts B-F of the committee questionnaire. The text of the questionnaire is set forth in the Appendix to this volume. The nominee's answers to Parts B-F are contained in the committee's executive files.]

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**SIGNATURE AND DATE**

I hereby state that I have read and signed Parts A and B of the foregoing Senate Armed Services Committee Questionnaire, and that the information provided therein and in any document appended thereto, is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, current, accurate, and complete.



This 5<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2025

[The nomination of Mr. Michael P. Duffey was reported to the Senate by Chairman Wicker on April 8, 2025, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on June 3, 2025.]

[Prepared questions submitted to Mr. Emil Michael by Chairman Wicker prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

*Question.* Section 133a of title 10, U.S. Code, provides that the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (USD(R&E)) shall be appointed from civilian life from among persons who have an extensive technology, science, or engineering background and experience with managing complex or advanced technological programs.

What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering?

*Answer.* The Under Secretary serves as the Principal Staff Assistant (PSA) and advisor to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense for all matters regarding the Department of Defense (DOD) Research and Engineering (R&E) Enterprise, technology development, technology transition, developmental prototyping, experimentation, and developmental testing activities and programs, and, most importantly, unifying defense R&E efforts across DOD.

From many of the duties assigned, chief among them is that the Under Secretary serves as the Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of DOD with the mission of advancing technological innovation. The CTO provides technical leadership and oversight, establishes strategic priorities, issues guidance, and acts as the senior responsible official for the supervision of all programs and activities pertaining to the R&E Enterprise across DOD. The USD(R&E) also establishes policies and strategic technical guidance to ensure that all programs receive an objective viewpoint as to their technical feasibility and the tradeoffs among different technology approaches and leads defense research, engineering, developmental prototyping and experimentation, developmental test and evaluation, and microelectronics activities across DOD Components.

*Question.* What background and experience do you possess that qualify you to perform these duties?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would bring my decades of leadership across many different technology businesses and management of large and complex organizations, including my time Chief Business Officer at Uber, to ensure that the United States has the most technologically sophisticated and affordable arsenal of defense systems in the history of the world. I have been involved with over fifty different technology companies during my career and have learned the hard tradeoffs that have to be made to bring new ideas to fruition based on advancements in state-of-the-art innovations.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

*Question.* Federal ethics laws, to include 18 U.S.C. § 208, prohibit government employees from participating in matters where they, or certain family members or organizations with which they have certain relationships, have a financial interest.

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

Answer. Yes, I agree.

*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 will comply with all recusal requirements under 18 U.S.C. § 208.

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

Answer. Yes, I agree.

## RELATIONSHIPS

*Question.* Please describe your understanding of the relationships and areas of collaboration between the USD(R&E) and the following officials and organizations:

The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment

Answer. Prior to 2017, the duties and roles of the USD(R&E) and the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)) were combined under the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. While the present organizational structure charges two Under Secretaries with important missions independent of one another, the two offices must work closely together to ensure that DOD is able to rapidly insert the latest technologies into the next generation of weapons systems while ensuring that the projects are feasible, and the timelines and costs are predictable. If confirmed, I am committed to working in close collaboration with USD(A&S) to ensure that DOD makes real progress on all of its priorities.

*Question.* The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

Answer. The USD(R&E) supports policy development in multiple spheres, including on matters of missile defense; for joint research and engineering programs with our Allies; for program and technology protection plans in consultation with the Defense Technology Security Administration (DTSA); and in the development of the roadmaps for the critical technology areas, which need to be informed by various policy and strategy directorates. If confirmed, I am committed to working closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to ensure we maintain and expand collaborative relationships across the two organizations.

*Question.* The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Answer. Critical to the Department's success in developing technology superiority is building a culture of innovation in its people. The USD(R&E) and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) must work closely together to make sure that DOD makes the best use of its hiring flexibilities and is recruiting a workforce that is ready to implement the Secretary's priorities of restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence. In particular, the recruitment and retention of research and engineering talent in a world of increasing private sector options is a key priority I intend to work on closely with the USD (P&R).

*Question.* The Director of Operational Test and Evaluation

Answer. Under the USD(R&E) resides the responsibility for developmental test oversight and policy, as well as the Test Resource Management Center which oversees the test capability development and test capacity of the entire test and evaluation (T&E) ecosystem of the Department. If confirmed, I would work with the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation to enhance the effectiveness, suitability, and survivability of DOD systems. I would communicate frequently with the Director to discuss strategic T&E policy and review the status of current collaboration efforts. There is a lot that can be done in collaboration between the USD(R&E) and the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation to smooth and speed up the transition of weapon systems from developmental testing to operational testing. If confirmed, I would look forward to strengthening our T&E ecosystem alongside the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation.

*Question.* The Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency

Answer. The USD(R&E) works closely through the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (USD(I&S)) to communicate the intelligence needs of the DOD R&E Enterprise to the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, and also

to the wider Intelligence Community, in order to make informed technology development decisions. As our adversaries have greater capability to intrude in our systems and in our work product, collaboration with the USD (I&S) is vital to the retaining the value we are creating across the R&E Enterprise.

*Question.* The Director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)

*Answer.* The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is a Defense Agency under the authority, direction, and control of the USD(R&E). I am committed to ensuring that DAPRA, one of the crown jewels of DOD, continues to have the support it needs to conduct the breakthrough research, but that it also is focused on missions that most align with a rapidly changing world and is a beacon of excellence within the R&E Enterprise.

*Question.* The Director of the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU)

*Answer.* The Director, DIU, is now a PSA to the Secretary and has a mandate for accelerating the adoption of commercial technology throughout the DOD. Until recently, the Director, DIU, directly reported to the USD(R&E). As such, I understand the working relationships between the DIU and the Office of the USD(R&E) are collaborative and, if confirmed, I would strive to continue this constructive collaboration to ensure that relevant technologies, whether commercially or government derived, can successfully transition from research and development, to prototype, to fielded into the hands of our warfighters.

*Question.* The Director of the Office of Strategic Capital (OSC)

*Answer.* The Director of the Office of Strategic Capital (OSC) is a direct report to the USD(R&E). OSC develops and implements strategies and partnerships to accelerate and scale private investment in critical technologies needed for national security with new tools for the Department through Federal financing. While there are currently many Federal financing programs across the Government, before the OSC none existed to address technology investment shortfall issues at DOD. OSC works within the Federal Government to ensure that DOD leverages U.S. advantages in private capital markets to achieve national security priorities. I will do everything possible to support and, potentially expand, the mission of the Director of OSC.

*Question.* The Director of the Defense Microelectronics Activity

*Answer.* The Defense Microelectronics Activity (DMEA) is critical, organizational element of the Department providing reliable microelectronics products and solutions to DOD. The DMEA was part of OUSD(R&E) until January 2021, when DMEA was transferred and placed under the authority, direction, and control of the USD(A&S). If confirmed, I will work closely with the USD(A&S) and the Director of the DMEA to co-develop and expand assurance techniques for microelectronics and to collaboratively ensure DMEA's role in the Department's organic manufacturing industrial base is aligned to both sustainment and research objectives.

*Question.* The Administrator of the Defense Technical Information Center

*Answer.* The Administrator of the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC) is a direct report to the USD(R&E). On behalf of OUSD(R&E), the DTIC administers science and technology (S&T) policy, captures the results of research into a central repository of knowledge, and delivers that knowledge to the community. DTIC reaches across Military Service and Defense Agency silos to connect people and activities. On behalf of the OUSD(R&E), DTIC operates information analysis centers that manage research and development contracts supporting research and analysis services to DOD. If confirmed, would look for opportunities to increase the value that DTIC could provide to DOD.

*Question.* The Director of the Test Resource Management Center

*Answer.* The Director of the Test Resource Management Center (TRMC) is a direct report to the USD(R&E). The TRMC is charged with oversight of the Department's testing and range facilities, as well as certifying the sufficiency of DOD Components' budgeted investments in test infrastructure, maintenance, and upgrades. If confirmed, I look forward to providing direction to ensure the TRMC is able to accomplish its departmental roles and responsibilities supporting DOD needs.

*Question.* The Director of the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office

*Answer.* Trusted artificial intelligence and autonomy (TAI&A) is one of the DOD Critical Technology Areas under the OUSD(R&E). Therefore, the Director of the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office (CDAO) and the USD(R&E) should work closely on areas of overlapping interest, to ensure deconfliction of efforts, and to take mutually reinforcing positions.

*Question.* The Director of the Defense Digital Service

*Answer.* The Defense Digital Service (DDS), now under the Director, CDAO, offers a software engineering and a product management approach to solving problems

across DOD. If confirmed, I would seek to leverage the expertise the DDS offers to further advance the modernization priorities of Department.

*Question.* The Director of the Space Development Agency

Answer. The Director of the Space Development Agency (SDA) is developing critical space architecture that will support missile defense capabilities; therefore, the SDA and the OUSD(R&E) should have a collaborative relationship that ensures interoperability between all phases of the missile defense kill chain.

*Question.* The Director of the Missile Defense Agency (MDA)

Answer. The Director of MDA is a direct report to the USD(R&E). Areas of collaboration include a heavy emphasis on advanced capabilities to include directed energy, hypersonic defense and various special access programs. Additionally, the USD(R&E) chairs the Missile Defense Executive Board.

*Question.* The Service Acquisition Executives

Answer. Service Acquisition Executives lead development, procurement, and fielding of materiel solutions for the Military Services. The USD(R&E), through their relationships with the Joint Staff and Combatant Commands, can align technology development to joint requirements to inform S&T and prototyping investments. Portfolio leads from the Critical Technology Areas also work across the Military Services with the Service Acquisition Executives to support transition of critical technologies from the respective roadmaps. The USD(R&E) must continue to work closely with the Military Services to integrate roadmaps and leverage prototyping and experimentation investments for joint applications.

*Question.* The Service Science and Technology Executives

Answer. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Science & Technology, who reports directly to the USD(R&E), chairs the S&T Executive Committee composed of the S&T Executives from the Military Services and Defense Agencies with equity in the S&T Enterprise. This committee provides a forum to unify and coordinate S&T strategies, budgets, and execution decisions. In coordination with the Military Services' and Defense Agencies' S&T Executives via the S&T Executive Committee, the OUSD(R&E) oversees, coordinates, and aligns investments to maximize the Department's resources, avoid unnecessary duplication, and create the future capabilities required by the Nation.

*Question.* The Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC)

Answer. The USD(R&E) serves as a Statutory Advisor to the JROC. I understand that in this role the USD(R&E) advises the Joint Staff on the status of technology development to shape requirements development (e.g., capability portfolio management review) and to conduct mission analysis to provide oversight to relevant working groups. Additionally, the Joint Staff and the USD(R&E) partner to operationalize the Joint Warfighting Concept through multi-year experimentation campaigns. If confirmed, I would seek to continue these important avenues of collaboration and ensure that the viewpoint of the CTO on the feasibility of requirements is represented.

*Question.* The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States

Answer. It is my understanding that the USD(R&E) provides expert technical subject matter expertise, especially on critical technology areas, in support of the Under Secretary for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)), who represents the Secretary before the Committee in the review of foreign investments for national security considerations. If confirmed, I will ensure my organization continues to provide this objective and timely expert technical advice associated with each foreign investment related to U.S. critical technology, defense critical infrastructure, and sensitive data, and the corresponding risk to national security and U.S. technological advantage.

*Question.* The Defense Science Board (DSB)

Answer. The Defense Science Board (DSB) is a Federal Advisory Committee tasked with providing independent advice and recommendations on matters supporting the DOD's scientific and technical enterprise. The DSB is supported through the OUSD(R&E), which helps ensure compliance with the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, "the Sunshine Act," and DOD policies and procedures. The DSB focuses on specific tasks in response to the USD(R&E) or from the Secretary of Defense and is an extremely valuable source of independent advice for the Department. If confirmed I will fully support DSB as it engages its important mission.

*Question.* The Defense Innovation Board

Answer. The Defense Innovation Board (DIB), previously under OUSD(R&E) and now under DIU, brings together experts from outside the government, offering fresh perspectives and innovative ideas that the DOD can draw upon. The DIB advises on projects and initiatives related to defense innovation and also shares information and best practices to promote a more innovative culture within DOD.

*Question.* Federally Funded Research and Development Centers

*Answer.* The USD(R&E) is charged with the oversight of the Department's 10 federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs). I understand the FFRDCs were established to assist DOD in meeting long-term strategic needs in engineering, research and development, or in other analytic areas essential to the Department's mission and operations. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the FFRDCs fully address the most important challenges that DOD faces.

*Question.* The Commanding General of Army Combat Capabilities Development Command

*Answer.* The Army Combat Capabilities Development Command executes the majority of the Army's S&T enterprise investments, along with the Army Corps of Engineers Research and Development Center and the Space and Missile Defense Command Technical Center. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Commanding General, Army Combat Capabilities Development Command to collaborate on DOD S&T priorities with the Army.

*Question.* The Chief of Naval Research

*Answer.* The Chief of Naval Research is responsible for ensuring the Navy's S&T enterprise investments are unified and coordinated to meet Navy's capabilities needed for the future. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Chief of Naval Research to collaborate on DOD S&T priorities with the Navy.

*Question.* The Commander of the Air Force Research Laboratory

*Answer.* The Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) is the primary scientific research and development center for the Department of the Air Force and the Space Force. AFRL plays an integral role in leading the discovery, development, and integration of affordable warfighting technologies for our air, space, and cyberspace force. AFRL is an integral partner with OUSD(R&E) to ensure our military remains at the cutting edge of weapons technology. If confirmed I will work closely with the Commander of the AFRL to collaborate DOD S&T with Air Force S&T.

*Question.* The Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

*Answer.* The USD(R&E) works with the Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy on topics of interest to both the White House and across the Federal Government. Also, it is my understanding that the Office of Science and Technology Policy establishes committees to work on issues including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and workforce development, research security, and other matters as they arise. These committees are composed of experts from each of the Federal science funding agencies and work on reports and memoranda that advance the Administration's scientific agenda.

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING

*Question.* What is your vision for the Office of the USD(R&E)?

*Answer.* It is critical that the Department innovates more quickly and with more efficiency. If confirmed, I would look for opportunities to implement, as appropriate, best practices that I've used in the private sector to drive innovation at speed and with efficiency throughout the organization. I would seek to impact a culture that can be overly risk averse. To benefit from an innovative culture, it must be understood that there is knowledge to be gained from experimental failures and without such failures, the pace of innovation will necessarily be slow. I am committed to working with Congress to develop newer, higher quality and more efficient systems for the warfighter.

*Question.* If confirmed, what recommendations, if any, would you make regarding changes to the organization, management, and resourcing of the Office of the USD(R&E) so as better to execute its duties and responsibilities?

*Answer.* If confirmed, one of my first actions will be to review the organization for how to foster an innovative culture that can move with speed while being efficient. I will work to ensure that our priorities are aligned with the Administration's policies and that our resources have a clear strategy against which to operate. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the OUSD(R&E)'s budget including its plans for the fiscal year 2026 budget submission.

*Question.* Are there other assets, including staffing and resources that you believe the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering requires to optimize mission accomplishment?

*Answer.* A thorough review of the staffing and resources within the OUSD(R&E) is critical to ensure that the Department is aligned with the President's and Secretary Hegseth's national security priorities. Before taking decisive actions, I will want to thoroughly examine the organization's programs, budget, and authorities and solicit feedback from key stakeholders. Undoubtedly, the OUSD(R&E) can play a role in speeding up, reducing costs, and improving the performance of the innova-

tion ecosystem. As the percentage of any system that is reliant on both new software and hardware technologies has increased dramatically in the last decade, the need for the OUSD(R&E) to be an effective voice on feasibility, cost and fostering an innovation ecosystem is more critical than ever.

*Question.* What is your understanding of the role of the USD(R&E) in advising and supporting acquisition programs for the Department of Defense?

*Answer.* As someone from the business community, I believe I can bring a unique perspective. My understanding is that research and engineering can play a key role in improving the acquisition outcomes, particularly by providing unbiased and deep expertise to identify technical risk early on in acquisition programs. Recognizing that we are in a competitive race, I would work with my counterparts to evaluate whether the value provided by each step in the process is sufficient to justify burden on innovators and the cost and schedule impacts. If confirmed, I would work closely with my counterparts to bring best practices from the private sector and to be relentlessly clear-eyed about the tradeoffs that must be made between schedule, capability and cost.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure effective collaboration between your office, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, and the Services?

*Answer.* These are critical relationships and in this age of great power competition the stakes are too high to get it wrong. The statute that established the USD(R&E) gave it the mission of advancing technology and innovation, including by supervising technology transition. Helping to overcome the so-called valley of death is a core statutory responsibility that I am enthusiastic about. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that these relationships are functioning effectively to drive the innovation ecosystem.

#### MAJOR CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

*Question.* What are the major challenges that confront the next USD(R&E), in your view?

*Answer.* The USD(R&E) plays a key role in revitalizing the defense industrial base, creating competition, and building a modern and lethal arsenal. As the Department's CTO, the USD(R&E) also helps to secure our supply chains, prevent intellectual property theft and cyber-intrusions, and develop President Trump's Golden Dome air and missile defense system to protect our homeland. Further, the culture of the R&E Enterprise must evolve to one that delivers the best capabilities at a pace that exceeds that of our adversaries. This must include the reduction of duplicative efforts and re-focusing on key priorities that are clear and understandable to everyone at DOD.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would you do to address each of these challenges?

*Answer.* The challenges of revitalizing the industrial base and building a modern and lethal arsenal requires matching the appropriate DOD investment or development mechanism to each opportunity. For example, the OSC seeks to address industrial base and supply chain issues through long-term investments in companies with tremendous up-side for DOD, while development and transition tools like prototyping, experimentation and the Accelerate the Procurement and Fielding of Innovative Technologies (APFIT) program address the challenge of building modern and lethal capabilities while increasing the size of the defense industrial base, creating competition and opportunities for new and non-traditional defense contractors. Keystone initiatives like the President's Golden Dome air and missile defense system will require the systems engineers across the Department to collaborate on architecture and software, in collaboration with the development and acquisition communities.

*Question.* If confirmed, what broad priorities would you establish that you believe should be addressed by the USD(R&E)? What recommendations would you make regarding those priorities?

*Answer.* Capitalizing on technology leaps that arise once in a generation is the key broad priority for the USD(R&E). For example, learning how to leverage and safely deploy artificial intelligence capabilities to the maximum extent while leveraging private sector innovation and investments; ensuring the military fully benefits from the revolution of quantum computing; and pioneering novel and advanced domestically developed materials. If confirmed, I would assess the Department's efforts in these pivotal technologies to ensure the Department is able to take the lead over our near-peer adversaries.

*Question.* In your view, what technologies do you consider the highest priorities for DOD to develop, based on their ability to contribute to the Department's mission in the short-and longer-terms?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the Global Research Watch Programs and on the most recent horizon scans across the U.S. and adversaries' technology landscapes to inform my priorities. The USD(R&E) must balance addressing short-term capability gaps with the need to invest in long-term strategies to meet the missions of the future, while being fully informed on the threat perspective and armed with the most relevant intelligence reports. Without being read-in at the necessary levels, it is difficult to forecast technology priorities beyond highlighting artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, quantum computing, directed energy, and hypersonic capabilities.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you connect your technology strategies and plans with the efforts of other military services and combatant commands?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the OUSD(R&E)'s technology strategies and fostering strong working relationships with the Military Services and the Combatant Commands. The relationship between the OUSD(R&E) and the Military Services and the Combatant Commands is critical to ensuring that the United States maintains a technological advantage over our adversaries and the warfighter has the capabilities needed to deter and defeat our adversaries. The combatant commands are the first place to understand the needs of the warfighter and with the enormous R&E capabilities that the Services have, these relationships are key to the success of the USD(R&E).

*Question.* What scientific fields do you consider the most important for shaping and developing new technologies, concepts, and capabilities that will be the most relevant for future warfighting and defense missions?

Answer. Prior to being briefed on the important work already occurring in the S&T and engineering portfolios, I am reticent to name a single scientific field as the most critical. As the nominee to be the DOD CTO, if confirmed, I would be the champion for every critical field across the S&T and engineering enterprise that is contributing to rebuilding our military and reestablishing deterrence. However, across any of these fields, innovation is the most relevant concept that will contribute to our future warfighting and defense missions. Central to technological innovation is speed. Innovation does not stop at the invention of new weapons and defense systems but also in improving them reducing their cost over time. Innovation requires leadership that is willing to take bets on things that do not work but has the discipline to stop them with haste. Finally, innovation means focusing investments in S&T to the concepts that are aligned with our Peace through Strength Mission. Time and speed must be driving factors in all our decisions, particularly as a sophisticated near-peer, China, accelerates their research and engineering at a faster rate due to lower labor costs and shortcuts through intellectual property theft.

*Question.* In your view, are there any technology areas that should be added or removed from the current list of DOD's modernization priorities? If so, please explain your rationale.

Answer. It is my understanding that there are currently 14 Critical Technology Areas identified by the Department as vital to maintaining U.S. national security. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the work being done in all 14 Critical Technology Areas and ensuring the Department's resources are focused on our most critical challenges with the right amount of weight behind each area.

*Question.* Based on your experience, are there enduring technology areas that might not be considered emerging (for example, energetic materials, or corrosion control) that the Department should remain focused on as categories outside of the modernization priorities? How should the Department make investment decisions to balance the needs between these emerging and enduring technology areas?

Answer. The DOD should constantly review and update its modernization priorities to ensure it is responsive to the needs of the warfighter and is addressing critical threats, capabilities, and opportunities. For example, outside of the 14 Critical Technology Areas, the OUSD(R&E) also focuses on research in munitions; energetics; alternative positioning, navigation, and timing capabilities; counter-unmanned systems; nuclear modernization; autonomous systems; and advanced materials. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department allocates its resources in an appropriate manner to address the threats from our adversaries.

#### CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

*Question.* If confirmed as USD(R&E), you would serve as the Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of the Department of Defense. What do you perceive to be the current role of the CTO of the Department of Defense?

Answer. From my understanding, the CTO serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense for all matters regarding advancing

technological innovation. The CTO provides technical leadership and oversight, establishes strategic priorities, issues guidance, and acts as the senior responsible official for the supervision of all programs and activities pertaining to the R&E Enterprise across DOD.

*Question.* Based on your experience, how do you think this differs from a CTO role in industry? Are there aspects that you think should be integrated into the USD(R&E) role? Please provide details on your response.

*Answer.* I have been fortunate enough to have formative experiences in the private sector throughout my career. I am a firm believer that bringing best practices from the private sector into the Department is a top priority because, if adopted effectively, they will streamline operation and allocate resources more appropriately. In industry, the CTO role does not advise multiple separate entities and is focused on one entity and commonly has all the engineers developing a product in their organization. The CTO of DOD advises many different organizations with different systems, therefore broad expertise and an understanding of how others build things is most critical. The key practice that is relevant is that the CTO in private industry makes hard tradeoffs consistently. The choice of feasibility, capability and speed is a constant decision framework. I believe that the CTO of DOD could bring that practice to DOD, and it would drive important culture change.

*Question.* Should the role of the CTO be modified in other ways to enhance its effectiveness?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing how the role of CTO is currently supporting the mission of advancing technology and innovation. I look forward to advising Secretary Hegseth on how the CTO role can be modified, if necessary, to best support the mission.

*Question.* Given the growing role of information technology and software in military capabilities, what do you understand to be the differences in roles, responsibilities, and authorities between the DOD Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the CTO?

*Answer.* The DOD CIO and the DOD CTO must work closely together. The CIO ensures that the department has a solid information technology (IT) foundation upon which the CTO can build, while the CTO's insights help the CIO anticipate future challenges and strategic opportunities. While the two offices focus on seemingly separate efforts, their collaboration is key as they are essential for ensuring that DOD can effectively leverage the power of information technology and maintain its technological edge given the increasing value of data and of systems that can interoperate.

*Question.* Do you believe the position of USD(R&E) currently possesses adequate authorities to exercise the responsibilities of a CTO? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* If confirmed, one of my first actions will be to review the organization. I will work to ensure that our priorities are aligned with the Administration's policies and that we have the appropriate resources and tools to appropriately address our critical threats. OUSD(R&E) authorities will be a part of that review. I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that the Department has the appropriate tools to carry out our mission.

#### INVESTMENT IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

*Question.* If confirmed, what metrics would you use to assess the suitability of the portfolio of investments made under the defense science and technology (S&T) program, to include the magnitude and diversity of the investments?

*Answer.* The Department's S&T investments can and should align to key operational challenges and opportunities faced by the Joint Force, and if confirmed, I will assess the DOD S&T portfolios to see if the research areas are well mapped to address capability shortfalls and stay ahead of the threats. Such challenges and opportunities are driven both by top-level strategic guidance as well as by direct interaction and collaboration with the Military Services, the Combatant Commands, Allies, and partners. Science and technology often takes a longer view than other investments, addressing future military needs through deliberate, targeted investment. Since there is uncertainty about which technologies could provide revolutionary capabilities in the future, robust S&T investments must ensure our Nation is able to exploit emerging technology areas, informing new asymmetric warfighting capabilities and reduce risk of technological surprise by potential adversaries. An important metric would be comparison in capability to our adversaries, but also the degree to which DOD has advanced new technologies that don't exist elsewhere and doing so at a predictable cost and timeframe.

*Question.* In your view, should the Secretary of Defense's Defense Planning Guidance include guidance for the science and technology programs of the Military Departments? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* Yes, maintaining robust investment in S&T is vital to our Nation's future security. S&T can be used to rapidly mature advanced technology in response to operational need, but it is also the foundation of future military concepts. Thus, there should be guidance in the Defense Planning Guidance to ensure minimum levels of funding for that security.

*Question.* Do you believe that the Defense Planning Guidance should include guidance on minimum investment levels for the research and testing infrastructure of the Military Departments? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* As noted by Secretary Hegseth, it is President Trump's priority to achieve peace through strength. If confirmed, I understand it would be my role to make recommendations to the Secretary on the budgets for research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E), and that would include participating in the development of the Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) that influences the budgets of the Military Departments. I will work with the requisite stakeholders to ensure the Military Department budgets are sufficient to accomplish RDT&E missions for the entire DOD.

*Question.* What role should the USD(R&E) play in the detailed development and coordination of Military Department and Defense Agency/Field Activity S&T investment strategies, programs, and budgets, in your view?

*Answer.* The USD(R&E) should play a critical role in the development and coordination of S&T investment strategies, programs, and budgets for the Military Departments and the Defense Agency/Field Activities maximizing return on investments for joint applications.

*Question.* What role should the USD(R&E) play in the development and coordination of Military Department research and test infrastructure investment strategies, programs, and budgets, in your view?

*Answer.* The USD(R&E) is responsible for ensuring the priorities of the President's National Security Strategy and Secretary of Defense's National Defense Strategy are reflected in RDT&E strategies, programs, and budgets. In general, the USD(R&E) focuses on cross-cutting investments that go beyond a single Military Department. The USD(R&E) serves as an accelerator to use innovative contracting vehicles and relationships with private industry and academia to develop, test, and field new capabilities in coordination with the Combatant Commanders.

*Question.* What S&T areas, if any, do you consider underfunded by the DOD?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the OUSD(R&E)'s budget, including its plans for the fiscal year 2026 budget submission, to understand what, if any, S&T areas may need additional funding.

*Question.* In your judgment, will the lack of funding in these areas affect the Department's ability to meet the threats of the future? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* In general, the Department should seek to fully fund critical S&T areas to meet current and future threats. As mentioned above, if confirmed I would look forward to reviewing the Department's S&T budget plans to understand what, if any, S&T areas may need additional resources.

*Question.* If confirmed, what factors would you consider in assessing whether the Department's S&T investment strategy strikes the appropriate balance between funding innovative, disruptive technologies and addressing near-term operational needs and military requirements?

*Answer.* Balancing near-term and long-term investments is a persistent, multifaceted challenge that demands addressing immediate warfighting needs while also maintaining long term technical superiority over adversaries. Key to this task is aligning investments in critical technology and capabilities with warfighter needs that are derived from our national strategy. This involves balancing multiple lines of effort, including modernizing existing systems, developing new emerging technologies, and ensuring a robust, vibrant national security industrial base. Short term investments should include transitioning impactful capability to operational use, while long term investments should involve higher risk, high reward activities that have the potential for revolutionary leaps in capability. An important enabler for striking this balance between incremental vs. disruptive progress is continual risk assessment and adaptive budget processes to keep pace with ever-evolving adversaries. I would coordinate closely with the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, and Services to ensure our investments are aligned to Warfighter needs. The Department must also possess transparent, effective accounting systems to track spending, such as the Transition Tracking Action Group.

The Department's S&T activities form the basis of new technology components and system capabilities. High fidelity models and wargaming can provide insight

into the effectiveness of innovative disruptive technologies vs. near-term systems to meet operational needs. A collective informed decision can then be made to balance near-term needs vs the potential of a disruptive capability. In collaboration with other elements of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, especially the USD(A&S), I will support forming new pathways to get the most promising and relevant component technologies into integrating prototypes for rapid transition to operating forces while ensuring our developmental technologies always have an eye toward the next fight and the next challenge.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure the Department's leadership is aware of successful efforts resulting from investments in science and technology programs and organizations in supporting defense missions?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will seek opportunities to ensure the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and other senior leaders are made aware of successful efforts resulting from S&T investments, including by promoting their participation in engagements such as R&E's experimentation program. Additionally, I will communicate success stories up the chain of command and throughout the senior leadership.

*Question.* In your view, what are the critical legacy technology areas where DOD has needs that may not be met by industry or academia and we should be maintaining steady, sustaining investments to ensure warfighting capability?

*Answer.* This is an important question which is probably best answered after I have been fully informed. In my preparation for this hearing, I have seen multiple examples of "dual use" technologies where the Department benefits from the economies of scale and performance improvement pace that is driven by demanding civilian commercial competition. The Critical Technology Areas have a mix of suppliers ranging from existing companies with established commercial markets to new companies with yet-to-be established emerging commercial markets. Maintaining investments to ensure competitive opportunities to those with established commercial markets has the desired effect of increasing resilience if a portion of them have U.S.-based supply chains. Likewise, maintaining steady investments to ensure competitive opportunities to those with emerging commercial markets has the desired effect of increasing diversity by adding multiple reliable suppliers for DOD to access.

#### BASIC RESEARCH

*Question.* Given the continuing nature of basic research and the broad implications and applications of discovery-focused and innovation-focused sciences, what criteria would you use to measure the success of DOD basic research programs and investments, if confirmed?

*Answer.* Basic research programs have played a unique and critical role in exploring new scientific directions for revolutionary technology development in support of the DOD mission and continue to do so. For example, in the near-term, success includes generating a talented workforce that is able to continue developing solutions for DOD, and the emergence of technologies into production by DOD and the private sector. The velocity of basic research maturing into usable technology is a key measure that allows for more long-term investment because of the confidence it builds in the choices that lead to the start of new investments. Longer-term success involves technologies taken from the laboratories into programs of record and dual-use technologies acquired by the Department. New and well-integrated approaches to evaluate the potential impact of discovery-focused basic research programs are needed to facilitate the planning of transition efforts, accelerate innovation, but also better assess the DOD-relevant scientific innovations versus those of our pacing competitors.

*Question.* What concerns do you have, if any, about current levels of funding for Department of Defense basic research? How would you plan to address those concerns, if confirmed?

*Answer.* DOD basic research programs have benefited from consistent budgetary support over the last decade, but near-peer competitors, especially China, are increasing their investments in basic research more quickly than DOD while experiencing lower labor costs and benefiting from intellectual property theft. It is vital to have strong support for basic research in the Department, because otherwise there is a significant risk that China and other nations will be in the lead in fields critical to DOD in the future, but it is incumbent on the R&E Enterprise to be efficient in using its budget to produce more than it has in the past.

#### RESEARCH SECURITY AND PROGRAM PROTECTION PLANNING

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure that DOD's basic and applied research programs are executed in a manner consistent with National Security Decision Directive 189 and National Security Presidential Memorandum 33?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 189 has been executed through previous USD(R&E) memoranda and broadly defines fundamental research at the Department as basic and applied research performed at universities, or basic research performed at defense labs and in industry. National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM) 33 directs review of all fundamental research projects to protect against foreign government interference and exploitation. If confirmed, I would continue to carry out these NSPMs unless modified or superseded by new directives promulgated by the President.

*Question.* What efforts would you make, if confirmed, to enable the Department to benefit from open innovation in fundamental research, while protecting such research from undue foreign interference?

*Answer.* Fundamental research is critical to the Department in generating the science behind the next great warfighter capabilities. If confirmed, I would seek to balance open inquiry against the Department's research security needs as currently described in NSPM 33 and other relevant statutes and directives.

*Question.* If confirmed, what are your ideas for working with the academic community to limit undue foreign influence on university research programs, and limit unwanted foreign access to research expertise and results, without creating an undue burden on the open and collaborative nature of the research community?

*Answer.* I believe that the academic community, DOD, and the science funding agencies should work collaboratively to solve the problem of undue foreign influence on university research programs in an efficient and implementable way. If confirmed, I will work with the Office of Science and Technology Policy and other interested science funding agencies to implement consistent policies and procedures for our research community. Consistent training, awareness, and education to and by the institutions are critical to limit undue foreign influence in university research programs that supports the Department.

*Question.* In your view, what steps could the USD(R&E) put in place to ensure that regulations pertaining to Department-funded university research are consistently applied and monitored by DOD and ensuring they are well understood by the university community?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would prioritize promulgating and implementing clear, consistent policies across the Department with exceptions made speedily if proven to be needed. Finally, I believe the Department should work with university leaders to clearly explain what the Department wants and also to learn from them where burdens can be reduced without reducing effectiveness.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to protect U.S. research and intellectual property from undue foreign influence, without unjustly singling out researchers from certain nations?

*Answer.* Intellectual property generated by industry and the results of U.S. funded research is the bedrock of our economic and national security. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department's due diligence reviews for small businesses and university research are conducted based on a clear set of objective criteria in alignment with statute and this Administration's priorities.

*Question.* In your opinion, are there ways to better coordinate and streamline the research security guidance to universities and the Program Protection Planning carried out by the government? For example, are there data sharing systems to improve visibility for academia, industry and the government?

*Answer.* A holistic approach to research security and program protection, to include improving and streamlining information sharing, is vital to rapidly and securely fielding capabilities to our warfighters. If confirmed, I will pursue digital modernization opportunities to improve visibility of relevant information such as adversaries' problematic behavior, potential mitigating actions, and security posture best practices while reducing administrative burden to academia, industry, and program offices.

#### EXPANDING THE DOD ACADEMIC RESEARCH BASE

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take increase DOD engagement with universities participating in the Defense Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research?

*Answer.* My understanding is that the Defense Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research works to increase research capacity at universities that have not worked with the Department much in the past. If confirmed, I would make sure that the Department is engaging with these universities as much as possible to help researchers there better align with DOD research priorities and better understand how to work with the Department. The Department's research efforts can only ben-

efit from having more universities to work with. Based on what I know about the program, I would intend to be very supportive.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to increase the funding for and quality of fundamental research at defense laboratories?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure a balanced research portfolio to include looking for opportunities for collaboration with academia and industry, increasing scientific integrity, and actively engaging with our Allies.

#### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ACTIVITIES OF CIVILIAN AGENCIES

*Question.* Do you believe that Department of Defense and other national security missions benefit from robust funding for scientific research in civilian agencies? Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* I believe that national security in general, and the Department specifically, absolutely benefit from robust funding at civilian science agencies. At the same time, DOD should not ignore private sector innovations either. The DOD must apply a broad sense of non-duplication.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you work with other Federal agencies and the Office of Science and Technology Policy to improve coordination of research activities and harmonization of research funding decisions?

*Answer.* It is critical that Federal research agencies coordinate their research activities. There are limited resources for research and the pace of technological development is constantly increasing. Coordination is key to making sure we develop new technologies efficiently and quickly. This coordination should happen across the Federal agencies, from the leadership level on strategic issues down to the programmatic level on more tactical, project-by-project level decisions. If confirmed, I would want to have regular meetings with my counterparts at other Federal agencies and ensure that those that work within the OUSD(R&E) does the same. Within the OUSD(R&E), technology transition portfolio managers throughout the innovation ecosystem can work to harmonize funding for critical technologies across their research and acquisition lifespan.

#### TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

*Question.* What weaknesses, if any, do you perceive in the current defense S&T strategic planning process?

*Answer.* Each Military Service carries out its S&T planning to address its specific needs. This is necessary, but there is a risk that needs that are common across the Military Services are not adequately prioritized by each Military Service. The OUSD(R&E) is crucial to ensuring that the individual Military Service plans take in to account Joint needs and new technology opportunities. The oversight of Military Service S&T planning and fostering of collaboration between the Military Services on technology development in areas of common interest is a critical role that the OUSD(R&E) must fulfill to ensure a strategy that results in a robust, truly Joint S&T Enterprise. Further, cooperation with the various S&T organizations could help to limit 'requirements creep' and any capability falling through the cracks of various organizations.

*Question.* What do you believe to be the key attributes of a good technology strategic plan and how could these attributes be carried through effectively to the DOD programming and budgeting purposes?

*Answer.* Very little technology development has an impact in a vacuum. Good strategic planning must incorporate the many stakeholders involved in research, qualification, acquisition, fielding, and sustainment. Strategic planning for groundbreaking technology must also identify connections to Military Services and program offices to influence requirements rather than just respond to them. Moreover, a good technology strategic plan should balance technology push for global competitiveness with requirements pull, both addressing future warfighter needs. The plan should include near-, mid-, and far-term capability goals and technology objectives, and integrated across the department to ensure meaningful and cost-efficient progress. Last, an effective technology strategic plan should provide clear development metrics, identify where defense fits into the larger commercial investments in dual use technologies, and define a timeline for technology insertion into the acquisition process.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure reliance on technology strategic plans as foundational elements of the budget, planning, and programming process?

*Answer.* The OUSD(R&E) maintains senior officials for technology areas deemed critical to national defense, who are responsible for ensuring that science, technology, engineering, prototyping, and demonstration investments are effectively leveraged and fully aligned with DOD's priorities. If confirmed, I will assess if the

Critical Technology Areas are well aligned with the National Defense Strategy. I will ensure that senior officials, as well as other staff within the OUSD(R&E), collaborate closely with the Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), and the Military Services to ensure that technology strategic plans are foundational elements of the budget, planning, and programming process. There, however, must be an acknowledgement that the validity of any strategic plan has been reduced in time. As such, these plans must have elements that can be revisited in shorter timeframes if the situation demands.

#### TECHNOLOGY TRANSITION

*Question.* How would you assess the effectiveness of current transition processes and systems?

*Answer.* The current technology transition process is challenged. The primary challenge is the availability of funding in the year of execution or lack of clarity that the capability is on the path to becoming a funded program. As technologies mature and are proven funding must be available to support transition. The current PPBE process does not provide flexibility for accelerated fielding and DOD must improve the visibility in gives to the suppliers on their chances of succeeding within DOD.

*Question.* In your view, what challenges exist in technology transition in DOD?

*Answer.* The pace of change in technology development and on the battlefield has become much faster than the pace of change of requirements. The Department is too slow to develop the demand signal for a new capability to be relevant. If confirmed, I will attempt to help make the OUSD(R&E) a driver of future requirements to ensure we are investing in and fielding the right things at the right time.

*Question.* What would you do, if confirmed, to address each of these challenges?

*Answer.* The USD(R&E) can leverage the Accelerate the Procurement and Fielding of Innovative Technologies (APFIT) program to address the problem of the mismatch between the pace of budgeting and the pace of development; the APFIT program is successfully enabling innovative companies to bridge funding timelines and get technology into production up to 2 years sooner. The Department can also continue improve the relevance of its technology development cycles through leveraging multi-service collaboration and operational experimentation with the Combatant Commands.

*Question.* As compared to other technologies, do you believe that a different methodology is needed to transition software capabilities from research to operational use?

*Answer.* I was excited to see that Secretary Hegseth recently signed a memorandum recognizing that today's reality is "software-defined warfare" and directing all DOD Components to broadly modernize their approach to software acquisition. I look forward to bringing my experience from the private sector to support the Secretary in driving software modernization across the research and engineering portfolio.

*Question.* What are your views as to whether DOD's approach to and processes for funding technology transition must be changed? What sort of changes, if any, would you recommend, if confirmed?

*Answer.* An important challenge is the traditional budget process for emerging solutions. This has historically posed significant challenges for small businesses and other innovative businesses that desire to work with DOD. The APFIT program provides a model which has been successful at bridging the gap. Flexibility in funding is critical to accelerate prototyping, transition, and fielding, but also DOD must endeavor to make decisions faster and communicate more clearly to ensure that indecision fatigue does not set in with aspiring vendors.

#### COMMERCIAL TECHNOLOGIES

*Question.* What steps would you take to make appropriate use of commercial technologies for the benefit of DOD institutions and the warfighter?

*Answer.* We must utilize the strength and innovation of the U.S. commercial sector, particularly dual-use technology, to bolster DOD and improve Warfighter lethality. In my role as USD(R&E), if confirmed, I will advocate for the Department to fully leverage U.S. industry. There are programs in OUSD(R&E), such as Technology Readiness Experimentation (T-REX), that inform DIU procurement of commercial technologies for the Warfighter.

*Question.* What do you believe to be the most significant barriers to Program Executive Offices or prime contractor adoption and transition of new technologies, including but not limited to commercial technologies, into acquisition programs? What should be done to address such barriers, in your view?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that Program Executive Offices face many barriers when adopting and transitioning new technologies into acquisition programs. Such barriers include the misalignment of technology development throughout the community with acquisition requirements, a lack of program plans that include in-common points, and a lack of funding to incorporate technology transitions. If confirmed, I will work with USD(A&S) and DIU to remove these barriers, so technology adoption and transition is easier for the Program Executive Offices.

*Question.* In your view, would there be benefit to the Department's establishment of a comparative testing program for domestic commercial technologies—perhaps a program modeled on the successful Foreign Comparative Testing program?

*Answer.* The Foreign Comparative Testing (FCT) program has done an excellent job at determining procurement alternatives for current and emerging requirements, capitalizing on partner and ally investments and expertise in many warfighting capability areas. FCT authorities that allow follow-on procurement without additional competition could be applied to current defense innovation acceleration efforts to enable similar benefits domestically.

*Question.* What do you see as the test and evaluation needs for non-developmental or commercial items to ensure they can still meet the technical requirements and human factors needs of environments often more complex and demanding than commercial settings?

*Answer.* It is vital that the Department continues to integrate existing commercial and non-developmental capabilities to meet technical requirements in efforts to achieve cost effectiveness, resilience, and drive rapid innovation. However, commercial technologies often are not designed, in the first instance, to operate under contested, high-stress, and complex environments—including adversary electronic warfare and cyber capabilities. In my role as USD(R&E), if confirmed, I will ensure that technology readiness experimentation evaluates commercial technologies to measure readiness for the modern battlefield. I look forward to working with industry, particularly nontraditional defense contractors, to implement these processes. I believe that many commercial technology providers will work with DOD to adapt their technologies for dual use if the process is simplified and streamlined.

#### SYSTEMS ENGINEERING AND PROTOTYPING

*Question.* Does the Department of Defense have sufficient systems engineering expertise in its current workforce and contractor base?

*Answer.* Without having experience with this workforce and contractor base, I would want to fully assess the capabilities of these groups, if confirmed. Regardless, in order to address emerging challenges, we need to continuously enhance this expertise. The OUSD(R&E) leads a number of initiatives to upskill the systems engineering workforce. These efforts focus on equipping individuals with the necessary skills to perform critical acquisition tasks, such as systems engineering, digital engineering, production, quality assurance, manufacturing, information technology, agile software development, and testing. It is also important that we enable new contractors to compete for DOD business so that we have a more robust ecosystem.

*Question.* What changes, if any, do you believe should be made in the Department's systems engineering organizations and practices?

*Answer.* Engineering serves as the foundation for technology development, transition, acquisition, and sustainment. Studies of DOD acquisition outcomes have shown that implementing rigorous foundational engineering activities early in the capability life cycle leads to improved cost, schedule, and performance results. To achieve this, the Department must prioritize modular open systems architecture, digital engineering, and workforce training to deliver capabilities to the warfighter. By doing so, it can effectively identify, mitigate, and prevent potential challenges in development, manufacturing, deployment, and sustainment.

*Question.* What role does prototyping play in efforts to increase the success of the Department's acquisition efforts?

*Answer.* The development of advanced prototypes, coupled with rigorous experimentation in representative environments, has rapidly fielded warfighting capability. When coupled with appropriate, timely resource planning, prototyping and experimentation has enabled the Department to bring operational capabilities to the force two to 5 years faster than traditional acquisition pathways. If confirmed as the USD(R&E), I will explore seek to exploit the full potential of this approach with the Military Services and acquisition leaders.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you work to increase the breadth and scope of systems engineering projects and prototyping efforts undertaken by the Department and its contractor base?

*Answer.* Mission engineering processes provide the approach for systems analysis across complex operational environments. This approach defines breadth and scope of system engineering projects and prototyping efforts to fill critical warfighting gaps. These gaps are shared across the development community, academia, and industry for common understanding. This approach aligns a common threat, mission thread, and systems-of-systems architectures across the community. Shared development results in comprehensive solutions for acquisition.

*Question.* What are your views on the maturity and availability of digital twin or model-based systems engineering tools in the commercial space, and their potential applicability for DOD needs. Please explain your answer.

*Answer.* Industry has seen notable progress in digital twin and model-based systems engineering tools. These technologies demonstrate the ability to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance system availability. DOD must overcome barriers to scalability, complexity, security, and interoperability to fully realize the benefits of these tools. To this end, the OUSD(R&E) must continue to improve policy, guidance, and digital standards consistent with commercial best practices in this field.

#### VENTURE CAPITAL AND PRIVATE EQUITY

*Question.* In your view, what role should venture capital and private equity firms play in the Department's investments in developing technologies, including in the Small Business Innovation Research program?

*Answer.* Venture capital (VC) and private equity investment in defense technologies could play an even bigger role in the revitalization of the defense industrial base, particularly for small businesses seeking to gain entry and provide innovative solutions to meet evolving warfighter demands, delivering breakthrough, war-winning capabilities. Programs such as Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) provide opportunities for small businesses—many of which are VC-backed—to be a part of these revitalization efforts. If confirmed, I would pursue opportunities within the Defense SBIR/STTR programs that allows for small businesses to leverage critical defense VC investment, increasing the ability to rapidly develop and field critical capabilities at scale.

*Question.* What advantages and disadvantages do you see in the use of venture capital and private equity strategies?

*Answer.* Through programs at the Office of Strategic Capital, DOD leverages one of the U.S. strengths by leveraging the investment acumen and skillsets of successful and experienced fund managers who act as a force multiplier to surface, foster, and develop new critical technologies, components, and production processes vital to national and economic security. Such strategies can involve risk, particularly given investments in emerging technology companies, but funds can mitigate that risk by taking a portfolio approach while programs, such as SBIR/STTR, provide opportunities to fuse Government research and development funding with private capital from defense venture and private equity firms. Technology transition programs focused on bridging innovative solutions developed through the SBIR/STTR programs can benefit from contracting with venture-backed small businesses. With the Department's strategic efforts to acquire dual-use technologies in lieu of home-grown solutions, firms backed by private VC demonstrate strong commercial demand, which provides a level of both cost and technical risk mitigation when the Government is assessing investment of finite sources toward a particular solution or capability.

One disadvantage of VC and private equity strategies is that investors may need to see returns on a shorter timeframe, which may not be conducive for certain research projects. However, with clearer communication and changes that enable funding in earlier intervals, we could improve the effectiveness.

*Question.* Should the Department decide to use venture capital and private equity strategies, what steps do you believe should be taken to ensure that Department funds are invested in technologies and companies that properly reflect national defense priorities, avoid the potential for conflicts of interest by industry partners, and to ensure that the Department's investments are not diluted?

*Answer.* The DOD National Defense Science and Technology Strategy specifies 14 Critical Technology Areas vital to national security. Within that framework and consistent with statute, the OSC Investment Strategy further identifies and prioritizes integrated strategies for maintaining and enhancing competitive advantage. Investments can fail to reap synergies that might otherwise be available through coordination, both within OSC's portfolio and with the adjacent efforts of interagency partners and the private sector.

A foundational component of OSC's activities with VC and private equity funds is the requirement for participating funds to invest a significant portion of its portfolio in the DOD Critical Technology Areas. OSC, through its own authorities and

interagency partnerships, embraces these target areas for investment and implements programs aligned with DOD needs. Furthermore, OSC's initial program invest in the funds (rather than competing with industry as a direct venture or private equity investor), which alleviates inherent conflicts. OSC's mandate could be further extended to back-up financing to even further extend its purview.

*Question.* How can the Department leverage other innovative financing strategies, like loans, loan guarantees, equity or reinsurance to help support the technology development strategies of the Department?

*Answer.* Capital markets are a major source of strength for the United States in the global competition for technological advantage. DOD can leverage the advantage provided by capital markets through financial instruments like loans and loan guarantees, equity, and re-insurance, all of which have been used as part of proven strategies to attract and scale private capital in support of national security priorities, including the development of critical technologies, their components, and the ability to grow and scale production. When paired with DOD's expertise with promising critical technologies, supply chains, and broader industrial base requirements, these tools enable efficient investments that deliver unprecedented value to DOD and the taxpayer.

*Question.* What other strategies do you intend to employ, if confirmed, to ensure that the Nation's most innovative companies work on the Department's research and engineering programs?

*Answer.* OSC works with the private sector to strengthen technological advantages in the United States. By aligning Government and private sector incentives around technology areas vital to national security and economic security, DOD uses the power of the market and economic competition to attract the capital required for critical technology investment through organizations like OSC and programming like the SBIR/STTR Strategic Funding Increase.

#### BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP CONCERNS

*Question.* What concerns do you have regarding foreign beneficial ownership of DOD contractors and subcontractors, especially those with venture capital or private equity funding?

*Answer.* My expectation is that all DOD contractors and subcontractors, regardless of ownership and regardless of funding mechanism, work toward DOD's goals and objectives. Malign foreign influence, intellectual property escape, and poor cybersecurity are concerning issues that are also applicable to the entire defense industrial base.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure continuous monitoring and assessment of the beneficial ownership of DOD contractors and subcontractors?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work closely with the USD(A&S) to ensure appropriate reporting of DOD contractor ownership and any subcontractors that would risk our supply chain.

#### OPERATIONAL ENERGY AND ENERGY RESILIENCE

*Question.* The Department defines operational energy as the energy required for training, moving, and sustaining military forces and weapons platforms for military operations, including the energy used by tactical power systems, generators, and weapons platforms. Today, DOD energy requirements are projected to increase geometrically due to technological advances in weapons systems and distributed operations over longer operating distances.

If confirmed, how would you lead the Department in harnessing innovations in operational energy in order to reduce contested logistics vulnerabilities for warfighters?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work closely with the USD(A&S), the Joint Staff, the Military Services, the Combatant Commands, the S&T community, and industry to pursue opportunities to reduce the military's energy logistics vulnerabilities both domestically and abroad. I will support resilient, secure, and innovative energy solutions, including advanced power generation and storage, microgrids, and nuclear power, as well as advances to reduce operational energy needs to increase military capabilities while reducing logistics burdens associated with providing energy to the warfighter.

#### INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COOPERATION

*Question.* In your view, how should increased globalization of defense technology affect the Department of Defense's research and technology development and investment strategy?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to increase opportunities for industry to provide commercial solutions to the hardest defense problems. I would also engage with our Allies and partners to leverage their technological capabilities to complement and protect the Department's strategic investments in technology maturation and capability delivery. The OUSD(R&E) investment strategy should focus on reestablishing deterrence and maintaining strategic advantage while preventing critical technologies from falling into the hands of global adversaries or competitors.

*Question.* What do you perceive to be the most significant obstacles to effective international research and development cooperation, and, if confirmed, how would you address those obstacles?

Answer. From my perspective, the most significant obstacles to effective international research and development cooperation are conflicting priorities. If confirmed, I would increase awareness across the DOD Components' international science and technology activities to promote transparency and accountability across the Department as well as ensuring the DOD Research and Engineering Enterprise pursues international collaboration, both government-to-government and with industry, in support of the Secretary's strategic priorities and to deliver capabilities at the speed of relevance. Finally, I intend to work with the DOD Components to identify funding that will be used specifically to pursue international cooperation with Allies and partners that bring an equitable investment to collaborative activities.

*Question.* How would increased international technology cooperation and procurement of foreign goods and services affect our domestic defense industrial base, in your opinion?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work with the DOD Components to consider acquisition and sustainment pathways early in the co-development process. This will allow the U.S. defense industrial base to leverage the industrial bases of trusted Allies and partners to meet DOD procurement and production demands, potentially leading to a more competitive and innovative ecosystem.

*Question.* What best practices should govern Departmental monitoring and assessment of the research capabilities of our global partners and competitors, and of the global commercial sector?

Answer. While other parts of DOD and the U.S. national security community writ large provide critical functions of monitoring and assessing the research capabilities of global partners and competitors, if confirmed, I would also leverage the opportunities and insights offered by regionally embedded personnel exchanges and in-country stationed DOD technical experts. These individuals provide valuable insights into allied and partner capabilities and investments, which in turn can inform best practices for pursuing collaborative activities with those countries. Another example is expanding joint experimentations and demonstrations. If confirmed, I will encourage more opportunities to include allied and partner participation in DOD experimentations and demonstrations to assess and evaluate their capabilities.

#### TEST AND EVALUATION

*Question.* What are your views on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Department of Defense's developmental test and evaluation activities?

Answer. Thorough testing in an operationally realistic environment is critical for informing acquisition decisionmaking, identifying programmatic opportunities to apply additional engineering and risk mitigation resources, and ensuring operational readiness. I believe that DOD still has work to do to align its test activities with the new Adaptive Acquisition Framework and to ensure that test and evaluation processes are properly structured to assess software-intensive systems, new capabilities such as artificial intelligence-enabled autonomous systems, and to leverage new systems engineering approaches such as digital engineering.

*Question.* What modifications would you recommend to the test and evaluation processes in the Department to more efficiently and quickly develop and deliver operationally effective and suitable technologies to the warfighter?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to improving the Department's use of digital ecosystems across the capability lifecycle from science and technology work through systems delivery and sustainment while providing data-driven decisionmaking through a campaign of learning, all focused on delivering operationally effective and suitable technologies to the warfighter.

*Question.* What role do you believe OSD should play in developmental test and what type of organizational structure and staffing is required to effectuate this role?

Answer. Per section 133a of title 10, U.S. Code, the USD(R&E) is responsible for establishing policies on and supervising developmental testing activities and programs across the Department. If confirmed, I will review the existing organizational structure and staffing and from that determine what, if any, changes are needed

to maintain an effective developmental test and evaluation role across the Department.

*Question.* What are your views with respect to the Test Resources Management Center and in particular with respect to ensuring the services budget appropriately funding for Major Range Test Facility Bases such as the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Test Site?

*Answer.* I support the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2025, which gives the TRMC additional authorities to oversee the support infrastructure on the Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands, which encompasses the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Test Site. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Director of the TRMC and the Secretary of the Army to ensure these facilities are adequately maintained and upgraded consistent with Secretary Hegseth's priorities.

*Question.* Do you believe the Office of the Test Resource Management Center (TRMC) has sufficient resources and authority to manage the test and evaluation infrastructure of the Department? If not, what changes would you recommend?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working with the TRMC to understand its current resources and authorities and to determine if those are sufficient to manage the T&E infrastructure for the Department.

*Question.* Do you believe the Department has sufficient test and evaluation infrastructure to support the needs of both research and development and acquisition? If not, how would you ensure DOD has sufficient test and evaluation infrastructure?

*Answer.* As I understand it, the Department faces big challenges in meeting the projected demand for testing new technologies like hypersonic weapons. If confirmed, I will need to verify that the Department's current and planned T&E infrastructure will be sufficient to meet projected demand. I would work with the requisite stakeholders to determine sufficiency of current T&E infrastructure and make any necessary adjustments.

#### SMALL BUSINESS ISSUES

*Question.* The Department of Defense has the largest Small Business Innovation and Research Program (SBIR) government wide. In 2025, the SBIR program will be up for renewal.

What recommendations do you have to improve the Department's use of the Small Business Innovation Research programs in order to develop and field new, advanced capabilities?

*Answer.* The SBIR/STTR programs are important tools to grow the small business ecosystem that is critical to Department's modernization efforts. These programs have delivered numerous technologies and capabilities that have been adopted by warfighters and commercial entities. It is essential that the programs are executed in a manner that prioritizes Departmental needs, ensures merit-based selection procedures, and decreases barriers to entry to ensure a robust defense industrial base. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the SBIR and STTR programs to build on existing improvement initiatives and ensuring robust delivery of critical capabilities expeditiously and consistent with the demands of the Department.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you work to ensure that the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program is an integral part of DOD modernization strategies and activities?

*Answer.* The DOD invests over \$3 billion each fiscal year through the SBIR/STTR programs in innovative technologies to meet critical needs of the warfighter and grow and modernize the defense industrial base while ensuring responsible stewardship of taxpayer funds. If confirmed, I am committed to working with Congress, the Service Acquisition Executives, and all other parties of interest to ensure that the SBIR/STTR programs are fulfilling their missions of developing and delivering innovation, consistent with the Department's modernization strategies and Critical Technology Areas.

*Question.* If confirmed, how might you modify the SBIR program to improve the transition of S&T capabilities into acquisition programs?

*Answer.* Many game-changing technologies adopted by DOD came from small innovative businesses. The SBIR and STTR programs are important tools to support the small business ecosystem. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing these programs and driving efficiencies. I will work closely with Congress and with my counterpart, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, to make appropriate improvements to the SBIR program.

*Question.* If confirmed, how might you modify the SBIR program to improve its ability to attract new entrants into the defense ecosystem, such as small startup companies, as participants?

*Answer.* Small business concerns, including nontraditional defense contractors, may require additional assistance to understand Government-specific processes and procedures such as proposal submission requirements, pre-award activities, cybersecurity rules and practices, and foreign disclosure requirements. If confirmed, I would work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and the Director of the DOD Office of Small Business Programs to review ways to increase opportunities to educate small business concerns, ensuring the Department is making a concentrated effort to educate small businesses on how to do business with DOD.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to improve DOD's consideration of intellectual property rights as an incentive for small business to engage with the Department?

*Answer.* Many game-changing technologies adopted by DOD came from small innovative businesses. The SBIR and STTR programs are important tools to support the small business ecosystem. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing these programs and working with my counterpart, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, on ways to improve how the Department incentivizes small business to engage with intellectual property rights.

*Question.* What emphasis would you place, if confirmed, on participation by the acquisition community in setting research priorities for the SBIR program and in incorporating new technologies and methods into existing programs of record?

*Answer.* Many game-changing technologies adopted by DOD came from small innovative businesses. The SBIR program is an important tool to support the small business ecosystem. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this program and working with my counterpart, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, to involve the acquisition community in setting research priorities for the program and incorporating new technologies and methods into existing programs of record.

*Question.* The 2022 reauthorization of the Small Business Innovation and Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) place several due diligence requirements on all participating agencies, required a certain number of "open topic" solicitations, and set minimum performance standards for experienced SBIR firms.

As Congress focuses on reauthorization of SBIR and STTR in 2025, in your view, are there authorities that could be expanded to incentivize the number of new entrants into the SBIR program?

*Answer.* The SBIR program is an important tool to support the small business ecosystem. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this program and exploring how the Department can incentivize new entrants into the SBIR program and improve its effectiveness. Current authorities lack a clear definition of open topics, so I believe a clearer definition is needed to ensure consistency of open topic generation across the Department. Additionally, I would like to see the Department have a delegation of authority for setting threshold amounts for Sequential Phase II awards to more effectively take innovative solutions across the valley of death, scale production or operational testing, and reach program transition or commercialization.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to improve existing risk management processes to ensure intellectual property and technology do not end up with adversaries?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will review the current policies and data captured by the Defense SBIR/STTR Program Office with regards to due diligence and explore how to work with different stakeholders to improve existing risk management to ensure intellectual property and technology do not end up in the hands of adversaries.

*Question.* In what ways can the Department balance the desire for new entrants into the defense space with the need for veteran SBIR providers that have a successful track record for delivering needed technology solutions to the Department?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with the Defense SBIR/STTR Program Office to review the current ratio of new entrants to existing awardees and commit to ensure that policies are in place to meet the needs of the Warfighter.

*Question.* How can we better collect and align data on SBIR between the DOD components and that collected and presented by the Small Business Administration to ensure consistent analysis of outcomes?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would explore opportunities to improve data collection.

#### DEFENSE LABORATORIES

*Question.* What is your overall assessment of the technical capabilities and quality of Defense laboratories relative to their peers at the Department of Energy, and in

federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs), industry, and academia—both foreign and domestic?

Answer. Defense laboratories and FFRDCs can play a critical role in national security by conducting specialized research and developing technologies not easily replicable elsewhere. Comparing them to other sectors, including the foreign sector, requires careful consideration of their distinct missions, strengths, and limitations.

*Question.* In your view, are there specific or unique capabilities the defense laboratories provide the Department that industry would not be capable of providing?

Answer. The defense laboratories have world-class scientists and engineers capable of leading the development of technologies critical to the distinctive needs of the military fighting force. With quality scientists and engineers and unique laboratories and testing facilities, the defense laboratories are capable of tackling high risk technical challenges that may be in some cases beyond what industry and academia can achieve on their own. In addition, as leaders in technology development, the defense laboratories and test centers focus on the needs of the warfighter as their top priority.

*Question.* What do you believe to be the most effective management and human resources approaches for personnel at these Defense laboratory facilities?

Answer. An innovative and empowered workforce requires a flexible and progressive human resources system. My understanding is that the Department's Science and Technology Reinvention Laboratory (STRL) Personnel Demonstration Program (Lab Demo), managed by the OUSD(R&E), may meet this need. The OUSD(R&E) collaborates with the STRLs to leverage congressional workforce authorities and to develop new personnel flexibilities to enable them to recruit, retain and cultivate a quality and optimized DOD Laboratory workforce.

*Question.* If confirmed, what specific steps, if any, would you take to improve the quality, technical capabilities, and mission performance of the Defense laboratories?

Answer. If confirmed, I would seek to review the defense laboratories and identify ways to improve quality, technical capability and mission performance across the enterprise.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTERS (FFRDCS) AND UNIVERSITY AFFILIATED RESEARCH CENTERS (UARCS)

*Question.* In your opinion, what role do the FFRDCs play in the defense research ecosystem? How would you characterize the value of such organizations to DOD?

Answer. It is my understanding that FFRDCs can be an important part of the DOD S&T ecosystem. At their best, FFRDCs can provide objective technical expertise, long-term vision, and a unique ability to bridge the gap between research and operational implementation.

*Question.* If confirmed, what suggestions would you make to better utilize FFRDCs across the Department?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the current policies and use of the FFRDCs to explore how the Department might more efficiently and effectively use the FFRDCs.

*Question.* In your opinion, how do the UARCs differ in role and purpose from FFRDCs, defense labs, and defense contract research organizations?

Answer. UARCs are university-based research institutions focused on long-term research with broad national security implications. The FFRDCs are objective advisors that provide technical expertise and analysis to address specific complex challenges, the defense laboratories conduct research, development, and testing directly tied to the specific needs of the Military Services, and defense contract research organizations are private companies that primarily engage in research and development driven by commercial interests.

*Question.* In your opinion looking across the full landscape of current UARCs, do you see any major technical discipline or research capability gaps that are not being currently addressed and would therefore benefit from a dedicated UARC? Are there any UARCs that in your opinion have outlived their useful purpose?

Answer. While I cannot currently make definitive pronouncements about specific UARCs outliving their purpose, if confirmed, I will review the current policies, UARC strategic alignment, and potential for adaptation.

*Question.* How do the UARCs help with STEM and workforce development that supports DOD?

Answer. Given proper direction, UARCs can promote appropriate STEM education, workforce development, and knowledge transfer that directly benefit DOD.

*Question.* If confirmed, what suggestions would you make to better utilize UARCs across the Department?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the current policies and use of the UARCs to explore how the Department might more efficiently and effectively use them.

#### WORKFORCE ISSUES

*Question.* What is your perception of the particular workforce challenges confronting the DOD research enterprise?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the research enterprise's particular workforce challenge and finding ways to appropriately address those challenges.

*Question.* How would you work with the personnel policy and management communities in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Military Departments to enhance the human resources flexibilities available to DOD labs, test ranges, and other research and engineering components of the DOD with a view to improving productivity, performance, and mission accomplishment?

Answer. It is my understanding that the OUSD(R&E) executes oversight of Lab Demo, the STRL personnel system. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to assess their needs to continue supporting their human capital requirements across the research enterprise.

*Question.* How would you work with the DOD lab, test range, and other research and engineering components of the DOD to maximize utilization of human resources flexibilities currently in place or newly authorized?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about existing and potential human resource flexibilities relevant to these components.

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions would you take to increase the recruiting and retention of scientists, engineers, software coders, and other technical positions across the Department's research enterprise?

Answer. Recruiting and retaining top scientists and engineers is a priority for the Department's research efforts. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about ways to increase the recruiting of key technical positions across the research enterprise.

*Question.* Are there "health metrics" that the DOD is or could be using to help ensure that the DOD research enterprise workforce is adequately sized for all of the tasks assigned to it?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to learning about ways to analyze and appropriately size DOD research enterprise workforce to ensure that it is capable of carrying out the priorities of the President and the Secretary of Defense.

*Question.* Are there additional workforce hiring or retention authorities that you would recommend to ensure the DOD research enterprise can attract and retain world-class scientists, engineers, and other technical professionals who are also highly sought after by industry?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about existing and potentially new hiring and retention authorities.

#### SPACE ISSUES

*Question.* What is your understanding of the relationship between the Office of the USD(R&E) and the Space Force? How can the USD(R&E) best support space research and engineering, without duplicating functions properly assigned to the Space Force?

Answer. The Nation is at a tipping point of maintaining or losing its advantage in the space domain. Given limitations in vital technical skills and the flexibility the United States must maintain for expanded maneuvering in space, the OUSD(R&E) and the U.S. Space Force must work synergistically to meet the needs of the Commander, U.S. Space Command. This means investing in research efforts that lead to joint material and non-material solutions that can be supported by operators from any Military Service. If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring that the OUSD(R&E) maintains a strong relationship with the U.S. Space Force.

#### MISSILE DEFENSE AGENCY

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to expedite the Missile Defense Agency's shift in focus to research and development?

Answer. My understanding is that MDA is prioritizing a greater focus on research and development with increased emphasis on nontraditional defense contractors. Specifically, MDA has stood-up an Advanced Capability Program Executive Office focused on rapidly developing critical missile defense technologies and capabilities.

If confirmed, I plan on reviewing the Department's approach to research and development, the utilization of prototyping, artificial intelligence in weapon system development, and expanding the technological advantages available to the Department

and the warfighter. The Department must invest in critical technology areas vital to maintaining the U.S. national security and must develop and apply 21st century technologies and accelerate transitioning key technologies to the Military Services and the Combatant Commands to maintain the U.S. technology advantage.

*Question.* What are your views with respect to divestiture of management responsibilities for existing weapon systems to the Military Departments?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to understanding how the MDA and the Military Departments work together on managing, operating and sustaining the Nation's missile defense capabilities.

*Question.* Should specific missile defense systems be transferred to the Military Departments, in your view?

*Answer.* It is my understanding the Department has examined this issue over the last several Administrations. If confirmed, I look forward to understanding how the MDA and the Military Departments work together on managing, operating and sustaining the Nation's missile defense capabilities.

#### DEFENSE ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY (DARPA)

*Question.* What adjustments would you expect to make, if confirmed, in the current style of DARPA research program management and investment strategy?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about DARPA's program management and investment strategy.

*Question.* What is the appropriate relationship between DARPA and the Military Service S&T programs and laboratories?

*Answer.* It is my current understanding that DARPA executes its high-risk model because of the existence of the Military Service S&T organizations that diligently pursue more evolutionary requirements-driven research. While the Military Service laboratories frequently provide the "Plan A" baseline for program advancements, DARPA offers a disruptive "Plan B," that if successful, creates leap-ahead capabilities, accelerated timelines, and/or dramatically reduced costs. Sometimes DARPA proves that a new technological vector is possible but needs the Military Service laboratories to carry out the maturation and system application work necessary to scale the new technology. The key to making these handoffs effective is ensuring that the Military Services don't get stuck in "sunk cost" or "not invented here" thinking that would keep them from embracing DARPA-created disruption and that the Military Services have the budget flexibility to be able to quickly pivot to new DARPA-driven opportunities.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to improve DARPA's effectiveness in transitioning successful programs and innovations to the Services?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about DARPA's approach to, and record of, transition to the Services.

#### OFFICE OF STRATEGIC CAPITAL

*Question.* What is your understanding of the role and function of the OSC?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the OSC's role is to attract and scale private capital investment in critical technologies and critical components in the supply chain to support American national and economic security. The OSC leverages the inherent competitive advantage of U.S. capital markets through loans and loan guarantees to motivate capital markets to support investments in areas that have been deemed critical by DOD. These priorities include production and component-level technologies critical to national security that adversaries are also currently prioritizing.

*Question.* How does OSC play a role in accomplishing the Department's core missions and functions?

*Answer.* The United States is in a technological-economic competition with global adversaries such as China. That competition requires critical component and production-level inputs that feed into both defense and commercial capabilities that advance U.S. national security in this competition. I understand DOD has historically provided grants for research and development and contracts for capabilities; however, the OSC uses Federal credit to incentivize capital markets to make investments into those component and production-level critical technologies that are critical for present and future national security. These direct investments address a "missing middle" segment of the current market and increase competitiveness and resiliency in the U.S. industrial base and supply chains.

#### SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM) EDUCATION

*Question.* Do you agree with the premise that the Department of Defense specifically, and the Nation as a whole, are facing a crisis in STEM education?

*Answer.* I agree that as a Nation, the United States generally lags in many areas compared to peer adversaries and other advanced economies in preparing our youth for postsecondary studies and careers in STEM. I believe that it is a national security imperative that our Nation, DOD, and U.S. industry and academia have enduring access to STEM talent.

*Question.* In your view, how have deficiencies in STEM education affected the Department's ability to execute its missions?

*Answer.* The ability to meet the national security mission and to ensure that the Warfighters have the technologies they need to complete their mission depends on the research and technology innovations that the scientists and engineers conduct at DOD research laboratories, engineering centers, and other defense agencies, as well as in industry and academia. Deficiencies in STEM education will lead to a short supply of talented candidates equipped to support national security missions.

*Question.* What role do you think the Department should play in supporting STEM education writ large, and also for service members and their dependents?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the role that the Department plays in STEM education. Clearly, the Department relies on talented scientists and engineers in the public and private sectors to carry out its mission.

*Question.* What role should the Department play in other K-12 STEM educational activities?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would want to understand the current role that the Department plays in K-12 STEM educational activities and make assessments guided by direction provided by the Secretary of Defense.

#### MANUFACTURING

*Question.* What role should DOD play in investing in manufacturing innovation and ensuring that the resultant innovations are adopted into defense industry and the organic industrial base?

*Answer.* The DOD's role in manufacturing innovation dates back to the Second World War. Today, the United States faces a more diverse range of adversaries, notably China, where the government has for decades subsidized the growth of Chinese manufacturing. The United States must routinely and effectively deploy advanced manufacturing solutions if the domestic industrial base is to outpace that of China's in economic or armed conflict. My sense is that DOD should accelerate the development and adoption of advanced innovative technologies and processes for manufacturing and sustainment applications across the DOD enterprise.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the performance and impacts of the DOD Manufacturing Technology program, including the Manufacturing Institutes? How are these institutes linked with the research and testing organizations in the Department?

*Answer.* I'm aware of the Manufacturing Technology Program, including the Manufacturing Innovation Institutes (MIIs) and I look forward to learning more, if confirmed. My understanding is that they both play a vital role in supporting innovation and the translation of technology breakthroughs into products. The public-private partnerships created by the MIIs provide an opportunity for the Department to leverage industry, academia, and State and local entities in a unique way that infuses the commercial and defense industrial bases with advanced manufacturing capabilities.

#### MICROELECTRONICS

*Question.* If confirmed, specifically what steps would you take to ensure that the Department of Defense has assured access to the microelectronics it requires for defense systems?

*Answer.* I understand the OUSD(R&E) manages the Trusted and Assured Microelectronics Program (T&AM) program and the Microelectronics Commons Program. Initiatives under the T&AM program include accelerating access to the most advanced microelectronics technologies from domestic foundries, development of methods to verify and validate the integrity of microelectronics procured for DOD missions, and promoting technology refresh on DOD platforms through prototype and demonstrations of improvements in capabilities derived from incorporating advanced microelectronics into systems. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the on-going efforts within the OUSD(R&E) and with interagency partners to ensure that DOD has access to the microelectronics it requires for defense systems.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the Department of Defense's microelectronics needs, to include both legacy, state-of-the-practice, and state-of-the-art?

*Answer.* It is my understanding the Department has the need for a variety of microelectronics including legacy, state-of-the-practice, and state-of-the-art. Some of

these needs are specific to DOD, such as radiation-hardened microelectronics, and others are needs shared with the commercial sector. If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring that the Department has access to the many types of microelectronics it requires for defense systems.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure that the Nation has an effective microelectronics research enterprise?

*Answer.* Microelectronics has been designated as a Critical Technology Area under the OUSD(R&E) which constructs research and technology roadmaps with reference to microelectronics research activities at other agencies. I would consider assessments of the microelectronics workforce, infrastructure, and industrial base capabilities are conducted and updated to identify gaps and opportunities that can be addressed with DOD research initiatives.

*Question.* What role should the Department of Defense play in supporting the commercial microelectronics industry?

*Answer.* The DOD relies on a robust microelectronics industrial base to manufacture the components needed to ensure that DOD systems deliver the capabilities needed by the warfighter. Research and development to accelerate DOD adoption of the most advanced microelectronics technologies supports the commercial microelectronics industry to the benefit of both defense and economic security. In addition, if confirmed I will support technology transfer of the results of DOD microelectronics research and development to the commercial electronics industry.

*Question.* What role should the Department of Defense play in working with the interagency regarding domestic production of microelectronics?

*Answer.* The DOD and the rest of the U.G. Government, collectively, can help aggregate demand for microelectronics supported through onshore full lifecycle capabilities. Communication and collaboration across the U.S. Government is key to identifying critical needs that are shared across agencies and prioritizing domestic production. Interagency engagement is a key element of the OUSD(R&E)'s mandate to construct research and development roadmaps and perform industrial base assessments of capabilities. I look forward to engaging across the U.S. Government to ensure DOD's needs are met.

*Question.* How can the Department of Defense reduce or mitigate its dependence on foreign sources of microelectronics for its systems and programs?

*Answer.* Onshoring of both advanced microelectronics manufacturing and the supply chains that support the industrial base will reduce DOD reliance on foreign sources. I look forward to learning more about the OUSD(R&E)'s efforts under the T&AM program to promote domestic manufacturing of advanced microelectronics.

#### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions would you take were you to receive or become aware of a complaint of sexual harassment, discrimination, or other harassment from an employee of the Office of the USD(R&E) or an employee of an organization over which the USD(R&E) exercises authority, direction, and control?

*Answer.* I have always conducted myself with integrity and professionalism in every role I have held. I stand by my track record as a business leader who has successfully led major innovation efforts and worked with teams across industries and governments to solve complex problems. I will State categorically that sexual assault and harassment have no place in our country's military and Defense Department. If confirmed, I commit to upholding all appropriate standards of conduct in the Under Secretary's office and will also familiarize myself with the Department's resources in instances of alleged misconduct, including at the Office of the Inspector General, and any tools from human resources and victim advocates, where appropriate.

#### 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 re-

quested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to consult with this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this committee? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, Federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

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[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROGER F. WICKER

NEEDED AUTHORITIES

1. Senator WICKER. Mr. Michael, with the enactment of the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (AT&L) was split into two separate secretariats, one of which was the Under Secretary of Defense of Research and Engineering, and the other was Under Secretary of Defense of Acquisition and Sustainment. Prior to this split, the Under Secretary of AT&L had specific authorities to control the research and development efforts of each service if they were not realizing the original goals set forth by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. After the organizational split, the Under Secretary for Research and Engineering no longer had that authority. However, the Under Secretary for Acquisition and Sustainment maintained that control over acquisition programs.

Do you believe the Under Secretary of Research and Engineering has the authority necessary to influence the research and development efforts of the services and components, or do you believe changes are necessary?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, one of my first actions will be to review the organization and review if any additional authorities would be necessary to make the organization more effective. I will work to ensure that our priorities are aligned with the Administration's policies and that we have the appropriate resources and tools to address critical threats. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (OUSD(R&E)) authorities will be a part of that review. I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that the Department of Defense (DoD) has the appropriate tools to carry out its mission.

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## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

## GOLDEN DOME

2. Senator COTTON. Mr. Michael, the President has made missile defense a priority. Golden Dome will need to protect America from cruise missiles, hypersonics, and maneuverable re-entry vehicles released by intercontinental ballistic missiles. What do you view are the requirements for America's Golden Dome?

Mr. MICHAEL. President Trump's Golden Dome is a key initiative that will provide air and missile defense to protect our homeland. If confirmed, I look forward to better understanding and having input on the requirements, including for specific missions and systems identified in the President's Executive Order for Golden Dome.

3. Senator COTTON. Mr. Michael, what critical technologies already exist, and what technologies must be developed and implemented to complete the Golden Dome?

Mr. MICHAEL. I understand that some of the critical technologies necessary for Golden Dome for America may exist. As a nominee for Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (USD(R&E)), I do not have access to controlled unclassified information or classified information that would inform a thorough answer. That said, I understand that the Golden Dome for America requires a wide range of developmental technologies that are specifically called out in the President's Executive Order, such as space-based intercept capabilities. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the critical technologies necessary to implement the Golden Dome.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR M. MICHAEL ROUNDS

## SOFTWARE ACQUISITION PATHWAY

4. Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Michael, as you know, the Software Acquisition Pathway (SWP) was established in December 2019 following the enactment of the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA. However, over 6 years later, DOD is still not taking full advantage of this authority. Earlier this month Secretary Hegseth issued the memo "Directing Modern Software Acquisition to Maximize Lethality" to direct all DOD components to use the SWP as the "preferred pathway for all software development" to include weapon systems programs. This is a positive development. As the memo notes, "DOD has struggled to reframe its acquisition process from a hardware-centric approach to a software-centric approach" and as a result, "it is the warfighter who pays the price." If confirmed, what specific actions would you seek to undertake in your organization to accelerate software acquisition, especially within collaborative and modular autonomous weapons systems, and fully take advantage of the more nimble and rapid development that occurs in the commercial software sector?

Mr. MICHAEL. I was encouraged to see that Secretary Hegseth recently signed a memorandum that directed all DOD Components to modernize their approaches to software acquisition. I understand that the OUSD(R&E) has already been engaged in software modernization activities, working closely with the DOD Chief Information Officer and the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (OUSD(A&S)). If confirmed, I commit to taking swift action consistent with OUSD(R&E) authorities to advance a culture of agile software acquisition and to promote agile development and procurement approaches, including the Software Acquisition Pathway. I look forward to bringing my experience from the private sector to support the Secretary in driving software modernization across the research and engineering portfolio.

## SPECTRUM

5. Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Michael, are you aware that essential DOD capabilities rely on use of the lower-3 band?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes, I am aware that the lower-3 GHz band is home to several critical ground, maritime, and airborne radar systems. My understanding is that these frequencies have properties that make them critical for our radar systems to find, discriminate, and track targets in all weather conditions. If confirmed, I would look forward to understanding the Department's specific spectrum needs and programs. Clearly, we must ensure that our warfighters have the appropriate, safe, and secure access to the right spectrum when they need it to complete the mission, and that it is secure for our national security needs.

6. Senator ROUNDS. Mr. Michael, if confirmed, will you commit to defending the DOD's access to and unimpeded use of this portion of the electromagnetic spectrum?

Mr. MICHAEL. Mr. MICHAEL. I understand the importance of this spectrum to our military and to achieving the objectives of the President and the Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving further briefings on this topic and will work to ensure the Department has the spectrum access necessary to achieve national security and homeland defense objectives.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JONI K. ERNST

SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION RESEARCH PROGRAM-SMALL BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY  
TRANSFER REAUTHORIZATION

7. Senator ERNST. Mr. Michael, the Department of Defense allocates more than \$2 billion dollars each year for small business research, development, and commercialization of new technologies. I recently introduced S. 853, the INNOVATE Act. The bill would reauthorize the Small Business Innovation Research Program-Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR-STTR) programs and enact reforms to accelerate commercialization of battle-ready technologies from innovative small businesses, strengthen research security measures to ensure that taxpayer-funded innovations do not benefit America's adversaries, and structure this program as a source of merit-based seed funding rather than welfare for small businesses. Will you commit to working with me and supporting the efforts I am leading in the upcoming SBIR-STTR reauthorization?

Mr. MICHAEL. The DOD invests over billions each fiscal year through the SBIR/STTR programs in innovative technologies to meet critical needs of the warfighter and grow and modernize the defense industrial base while ensuring responsible stewardship of taxpayer funds. If confirmed, I am committed to working with you, the Congress, the Service Acquisition Executives, and engaging with all other parties of interest to ensure that the SBIR/STTR programs are merit-based and fulfilling their missions of developing and delivering innovation, consistent with the Department's modernization strategies and Critical Technology Areas.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE RESEARCH FUNDING FOR ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH  
INSTITUTIONS

8. Senator ERNST. Mr. Michael, we must take all steps to ensure that academics receiving Department of Defense (DOD) research funding are not collaborating with malign foreign academic and research institutions. Therefore, Congress has required the Department to ban funding for academics with ties to malign institutions on the section 1286 list. Unfortunately, R&E has set a policy where malign institutions are added to the list only if they meet a very high threshold of evidence, such as a Chinese legal document attesting to a university's ties to the military. If confirmed, will you work with me to lower that threshold of evidence so that all foreign institutions that are reasonably and plausibly believed to be malign are added to the section 1286 list?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, in coordination with other Department experts as appropriate, on re-evaluating the thresholds of evidence for including malign institutions in accordance with the criteria established in section 1286 to ensure that we protect our intellectual property against foreign adversaries.

9. Senator ERNST. Mr. Michael, the Department of the Air Force's China Aerospace Studies Institute published a study in 2020 detailing 37 officer and non-commissioned officer academic institutions in China. (URL here: <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/CASI/Display/Article/2216778/the-peoples-liberation-armys-academic-institutions/>). If confirmed, will you work to ensure that all of these institutions, and any successor institutions, are added to the section 1286 list?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, in coordination with other Department experts as appropriate, and leveraging available resources to include malign institutions in accordance with section 1286 requirements both technically and substantively. I look forward to learning more about the specific institution that you have identified.

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## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

## ALASKA SPECIFIC ISSUES

10. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, as part of President Trump's Golden Dome program, there will almost certainly be a need to ensure that our advanced early warning radar systems like the E-7 are capable of detecting incoming aircraft and missile threats both at home and if necessary, forward deployed. We have had a number of issues in Alaska with E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) readiness rates due to aging airframes and parts. Will you commit to reviewing the E-7 program to make sure we are properly resourcing it and work with me to ensure that we have that capability on hand when required in Alaska?

Mr. MICHAEL. I have not been briefed on this Air Force issue. If confirmed, I would look forward to learning more about the Air Force's plans in this area, including a review of the E-7 program.

## AERIAL REFUELING

11. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, what role do you think unmanned aerial refueling (like the Navy's MQ-25 Stingray) will play in the future of air combat?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I am interested in learning more about this important capability. My understanding is that the MQ-25 and unmanned refueling in general is especially critical in operations within the western Pacific in which extended People's Republic of China air defense ranges and surface-to-ship missiles require extended carrier standoff. I look forward to studying these opportunities if confirmed and acting with purpose to ensure that we are ensuring the best capabilities are deployed as quickly as possible.

## F-47 FIGHTER PROGRAM

12. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, as you are aware the F-47 program was awarded recently to Boeing. While I have no doubt that Boeing was chosen because it had the best aircraft prototype, I'd like to know how you plan to hold contractors (including Boeing) accountable for any failures or delays in this program given its recent history with the KC-46 which is ongoing?

Mr. MICHAEL. Accountability for contractors is more essential than ever. The OUSD(R&E) plays an important role in acquisition, including through conducting independent technical risk assessments that identify technical problems early on in the acquisition process. If confirmed, I will work to provide independent technical risk and schedule assessments in support of these activities, in compliance with DOD authorities.

13. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, what do you think we learned from these previous programs that we should do differently with the F-47?

Mr. MICHAEL. As a nominee for the USD(R&E), I do not have access to controlled unclassified information or classified information that would inform a thorough answer. That said, in general, my understanding is that previous programs of a similar nature to the F-47 program have struggled with single-vendor, total system contracts that pose challenges from limited competition, flexibility, responsiveness, and contract structures that do not have incentives aligned with the mission. In addition, previous programs have been challenged by lack of access to modern data and business systems to effectively provide oversight. The convergence of digital engineering, systems engineering, and agile, iterative development will provide more effective capability development. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing these issues carefully and with speed and purpose.

## DEFENSE ACQUISITION AND PROCUREMENT

14. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, in a recent Readiness Subcommittee Hearing on Joint Force Posture, I asked each of the services' vice chiefs about budget flexibility and carryover funding authority to provide each service with the ability to shift a certain percentage of funds among capabilities each year. Do you think that the services would benefit from such budget flexibility and how do you think it should best be implemented?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes, given the pace of change in technology development and its use on the battlefield, additional flexibility to shift funding among capabilities, particularly in research and development, would provide benefit to the Services in accelerating prototyping, transition, and fielding solutions. Consolidating RDT&E budget line items or even budget activities combined with increases in the current

reprogramming thresholds would provide greater flexibility to transition programs and avoid start-stop funding, which delays technological deployment.

15. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, as you probably know, software-defined and autonomous systems are vital to U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander, Admiral Samuel Paparo's hellscape concept of operations (CONOP). And while not a panacea for a potential conflict with China, Admiral Paparo recently stated, "Unmanned systems [are] our force multiplier" and they "multiply [our] combat power, without multiplying our manning requirements." Specifically, he emphasized that "we have to build these capabilities at scale . . ." During his nomination hearing, newly confirmed Deputy Secretary of Defense Stephen Feinberg agreed stating, "Clearly, we need to develop autonomy. Autonomy in significant numbers with a centralized command . . . Additionally, while we continue to heavily invest in new autonomous capabilities, we also have hundreds—if not thousands—of legacy systems, some in service and others in the boneyard, that could be upgraded with 21st Century software."

In your personal opinions, in order to fully "scale" autonomous and software-defined capabilities "in significant numbers" to the warfighter, what approach should DOD take in retrofitting—or "jailbreaking"—legacy systems (that already exist in large numbers) with cutting-edge autonomous software capabilities?

Mr. MICHAEL. As we are seeing in Ukraine, retrofitting legacy systems can be effective. Often, retrofitting existing systems with software solutions is also the most cost-effective option. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the programs within the OUSD(R&E) to drive technology to retrofit systems. Wherever possible, we should use novel approaches to upgrade legacy systems to current missions as both a way to save time and money.

16. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, given the existing contractual limitations, what authorities or contractual changes would your teams need to execute these retrofits and unlock the latent capabilities already resident, but sadly dormant in our existing warfighting hardware?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to understanding any potential contractual and authority limitations and taking full advantage of opportunities to leverage significant latent capabilities in systems that are already on hand and other dual-use technology opportunities, in coordination with appropriate DOD Components and in compliance with DOD policy and regulations. It should be a priority for the DOD to request all additional authorities to leverage the installed base of systems to unlock new capabilities.

17. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, as the chief advisor for DOD Research and Engineering, you are charged with rapidly advancing technology and innovation and quickly delivering these innovative capabilities into the hands of our warfighters. Along these lines, in Secretary Hegseth's advance policy questions, he addressed the importance of autonomous systems in future conflicts. He stated, "It is clear that unmanned systems are a fundamental part of the future warfighting environment," and "recent events have shown that . . . autonomy . . . among [other factors] will play a key role in future near-peer conflicts." Given the clear priority and need for autonomous systems in future conflicts, if confirmed, how would you seek to remake and accelerate the development and deployment of warfighting autonomous capabilities?

Mr. MICHAEL. I understand that the OUSD(R&E) has been a leader in the development of advanced autonomous capabilities. If confirmed, I anticipate driving these initiatives further and faster as a key Department priority. Accelerating these capabilities requires partnerships across the DOD, engagement with academia and industry, and engagement with partner nations to identify emerging solutions and conduct advanced prototype experimentation. Joint experimentation serves to demonstrate technical feasibility, determine utility for the warfighter, and help develop combined and joint concepts of operation for multi-domain autonomous platforms and command and control. USD(R&E) industry engagement forums and partners like the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) serve to connect emerging solutions to DOD's challenges. For example, the Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve (RDER) program, in conjunction with the Accelerate the Procurement and Fielding of Innovative Technologies (APFIT) program, have successfully accelerated autonomous capabilities from nontraditional defense contractors for Combatant Commanders. We must catch up to our adversaries where behind and accelerate faster where we are ahead on autonomous systems.

18. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, is a national imperative needed to help us ensure our competitive edge against our adversaries?

Mr. MICHAEL. I agree that it is a national imperative to ensure our competitive edge against our adversaries and that we need to take faster action that may involve more risk to do so. The USD(R&E) plays a key role in revitalizing the defense industrial base, creating competition, and building a modern and lethal arsenal. As the Department's Chief Technology Officer, the USD(R&E) also helps to secure the Department's supply chains, prevent intellectual property theft and cyber-intrusions, and develop President Trump's Golden Dome air and missile defense system to protect the homeland.

19. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, last year, Congress received the report of the Commission on Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) Reform—a comprehensive report that outlined issues with the Department of Defense's defense acquisition system. I plan to lead efforts to cut bureaucracy and speed up innovation in the Pentagon and defense technology sector and I believe the recommendations in this report are a crucial step in doing so. Many of the reforms in that report do not need congressional legislation to execute but rather can be enacted by the Department of Defense and you, if confirmed. Will you commit to review the findings of that report and direct a Pentagon working group to begin implementation of the reform measures it outlined?

Mr. MICHAEL. It is critical that the Department innovate more rapidly and with more efficiency. If confirmed, I would look for opportunities to implement, as appropriate, best practices that I've used in the private sector to drive innovation with efficiency throughout the organization. The challenge of building a modern and lethal arsenal requires matching the appropriate DOD investment or development mechanism to each opportunity. If confirmed, I commit to review the PPBE reform measures and form whatever working groups and guidance are necessary to quickly implement reforms to ensure the Department is able to take the lead over our near-peer adversaries and are aligned with our peace through strength mission.

20. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, I am working with the Pentagon and through legislation to lead efforts that help innovative defense startups avoid the "Valley of Death" which results in long-procurement timelines and shuttered defense firms. Will you commit to work with me to fix this issue and to get feedback from non-traditional defense technology leaders and scholars to reform the Pentagon's processes?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes, I commit to working with Congress on this important issue without hesitation. The statute that established the USD(R&E) gave the official the mission of advancing technology and innovation, including by supervising technology transition. Helping to overcome the "Valley of Death" is a core statutory responsibility that I am enthusiastic about. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that relationships with non-traditional defense technology leaders and scholars are functioning effectively to drive the innovation ecosystem.

21. Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Michael, will you commit to reviewing the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) as outlined in the PPBE Reform Commission report and provide Congress with updates as to the regulations that need to be removed or amended to speed up acquisition?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes, I commit to reviewing the recommendations in the PPBE Reform Commission report to update regulations and speed up acquisition. And I commit to working closely with my USD(A&S) counterpart on this important issue.

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

##### UNITED STATES-ISRAEL COOPERATION

22. Senator BUDD. Mr. Michael, can you speak to your views on United States-Israel Cooperation programs, particularly for anti-tunneling, counter-unmanned aerial systems (UAS), and research on emerging technologies?

Mr. MICHAEL. I have not had the briefings or access necessary to provide an informed assessment of current U.S.-Israel collaboration. If confirmed, however, I would investigate these issues and provide an assessment upon request. I do commit to strongly encourage and promote such collaboration and look for ways that emerging technologies might improve it.

##### HYPERSONICS

23. Senator BUDD. Mr. Michael, how concerned are you regarding China's hypersonic capabilities and, if confirmed, what should the organizations you have been nominated to lead, do to ensure sufficient emphasis is placed on and the proper

resources are put toward the development of critical systems and supporting technologies that would help lower the costs and accelerate the fielding of the Department's offensive and defensive hypersonic programs of record, including those that would support Golden Dome?

Mr. MICHAEL. Hypersonic technology development is critical given advancement by our adversaries. I expect that the Golden Dome for America effort will galvanize a national effort to develop and field hypersonic systems both for offensive and defensive use. I understand that the OUSD(R&E) established hypersonics as a modernization priority and Critical Technology Area in 2018, partly in response to the growing Chinese hypersonic threat. The OUSD(R&E) leads the development of the Department's vision, strategy, and roadmap for hypersonic technologies. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Department's hypersonic activities, including those that will support the Golden Dome. This technology development must be combined with prioritization by all the relevant components of the DOD to both speed deployment and reduce duplicative efforts that could result in less focus on the realization of such capabilities.

24. Senator BUDD. Mr. Michael, if confirmed, are you committed to working with this committee to ramp up the Department's efforts in critical hypersonic systems and supporting technologies to compete with China?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Committee to advance America's hypersonic technologies. I understand that the DOD has made progress developing air-, land-, and sea-based hypersonic weapon systems along with both terminal and glide phase hypersonic defenses. The DOD must continue to increase the pace at which it develops and demonstrates new hypersonic technologies and concepts, must improve the affordability and producibility of current hypersonic systems, must expand testing infrastructure for more frequent and agile ground and flight tests, and, finally, must invest in the national hypersonics industrial base to support the DOD's needs.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

RESEARCH AND CRITICAL TECHNOLOGIES

25. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Michael, the University of Rochester's Laboratory for Laser Energetics, or LLE, is primarily supported by the National Nuclear Security Administration and drives innovation in inertial fusion, high-energy-density science, and intense lasers for the stockpile stewardship mission. The LLE is also leveraging their expertise and making great advances in laser science and technology to support DOD. What future role do you see for DOD to continue to leverage Department of Energy (DOE) capabilities to keep the United States at the forefront of innovation and high-tech education by advancing faster than international competitors like China?

Mr. MICHAEL. I see a significant role for DOD collaboration with the DOE areas. The Nation's research universities possess unique, world-class capabilities that benefit both the DOE and DOD. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to learn more about the Stockpile Stewardship Program and to collaborate with the Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration and academia on critical programs that address emerging threats, deter adversaries, and assure allies.

26. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Michael, America's leading research universities, including those in my State, have a long history of significant contributions to national security through science and technology research and development. Under your leadership, how will DOD continue to partner with research universities?

Mr. MICHAEL. Basic research programs have played a unique and critical role in exploring new scientific directions for revolutionary technology development in support of the DOD mission and continue to do so. U.S. research universities employ some of the top scientific minds from around the world and have been responsible for many transformative research developments in national security-related areas. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that Department-funded research continues to deliver greater capabilities to the Warfighter at the fastest pace possible.

27. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Michael, basic (6.1) and applied (6.2) research projects are the seeds for future innovations that will become new military capabilities. The Federal Government is the main funding source for the early stages of these long-term investments. How does the department plan to align incentives to drive faster tech adoption when funds for basic (6.1) and applied (6.2) research programs have consistently been cut by the Department?

Mr. MICHAEL. Basic and applied research programs are the lifeblood of future technological advancement driving future capabilities. If confirmed, I commit to working with Congress to ensure that 6.1 and 6.2 research has an appropriate level of funding to ensure that the U.S. maintains a technological advantage over its competitors. Additionally, speeding up the timeframes from basic and applied innovation to prototypes and fielding of systems will be important proof points as to the value of these areas.

28. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Michael, the Trump administration has expressed interest in cutting down the current 14 critical technology areas. How will those technology areas be chosen and what, if any, technologies do you currently believe belongs on that list?

Mr. MICHAEL. It is my understanding that there are currently 14 Critical Technology Areas identified by the Department as vital to maintaining U.S. national security. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the work being done in all 14 Critical Technology Areas and ensuring the Department's resources are focused on our most critical challenges with the right amount of weight behind each area. I intend to review these areas from first principles based on the current missions and will not hesitate to contract or expand them based on today's realities.

29. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Michael, if confirmed, will you commit to working with universities and academic institutions to help identify them?

Mr. MICHAEL. Before taking decisive actions, I will want to thoroughly examine the critical technology areas and solicit feedback from key stakeholders, to include universities.

My review of the work being done in the current 14 Critical Technology Areas will include work being done by the Government, private industry, and universities and academic institutions.

30. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Michael, how is the Department working to ensure that while focusing on technology translation and other commercialization efforts, it will support our top researchers in continuing their efforts to develop revolutionary technologies that will meet the most pressing national security concerns of the future?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I will work to ensure a balanced research portfolio to include looking for opportunities for collaboration with academia and industry and technology transition and commercialization efforts.

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

##### MISSILE DEFENSE

31. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Michael, in December, your predecessor highlighted that developing a hypersonic missile defense capability is an urgent priority as near-peer adversaries develop advanced long-range weapons. Hawaii, as the strategic center of the Indo-Pacific and home to key command and control nodes, is particularly vulnerable to these emerging threats. Do you agree that defending Hawaii against advanced missile threats—including hypersonics—should be a top priority for the Department?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes, I agree that the defense of the homeland, including Hawaii, is a top Administration priority as evidenced by efforts to build the Golden Dome. I expect that the Golden Dome will galvanize a national effort to develop and field advanced missile threat defenses. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the numerous DOD Components that are developing the capabilities necessary to defend the U.S. homeland.

32. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Michael, will you commit to accelerating the research, testing, and deployment of technologies that could enable a missile defense capability for Hawaii?

Mr. MICHAEL. The Golden Dome for America will, in its ultimate full realization, will safeguard the entire Nation and its citizens through a next-generation missile defense shield. The Golden Dome architecture will use next generation and non-traditional advanced technologies—including space-based sensing, space and terrestrial based intercepting capabilities, left of launch defense capabilities, and both kinetic and non-kinetic defeat mechanisms to counter all threats to the homeland.

##### RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING WORKFORCE

33. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Michael, the Trump administration is conducting mass firings of probationary employees and those hired through nontraditional pathways—like Highly Qualified Expert or “HQEs”. Many fill critical technical positions

in USD(R&E) and come from STEM [science, technology, engineering, and math] or the commercial industry. DOD has yet to conduct the required analysis to assess the impacts of these cuts on DOD readiness. Will you commit to following the law and conduct the required readiness analysis before terminating your employees?

Mr. MICHAEL. Recruiting and retaining top scientists and engineers is a priority for the Department's research efforts. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about ways to increase the recruiting of and retention of key technical employees across the research enterprise which includes assessments of readiness.

34. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Michael, what specific policies or oversight will you implement to ensure that critical technical personnel are not dismissed because of the Trump administration's mass firings?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the research enterprise's workforce challenges and finding ways to appropriately address retention and recruitment of critical technical personnel.

#### WORKING WITH ALLIES AND PARTNERS

35. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Michael, the Department of Defense must rapidly develop and integrate cutting-edge technologies alongside our allies and partners to meet the pacing challenge posed by China. How will you expand collaboration with Indo-Pacific allies and partners, including joint technology development or testing programs, to ensure interoperability and speed-to-fielding of key capabilities?

Mr. MICHAEL. The Indo-Pacific remains the Department's priority theater, even as the region is marked by increasing tension. I understand that efforts like RDER are leveraging joint and coalition experimentation opportunities in the Indo-Pacific theater now, and there are opportunities to expand collaborative experimentation through AUKUS Pillar II and with other interested nations. If confirmed, I will work to understand and leverage these opportunities and extend international collaboration in the Indo-Pacific theater so that the maximum possible synergies are realized while ensuring protection of our innovations.

#### DEFENSE ESTABLISHED PROGRAM TO STIMULATE COMPETITIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

36. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Michael, the FORGED Act also calls for eliminating the Defense Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (DEPSCoR) Program, a capacity-building program designed to strengthen the basic research infrastructure at institutions of higher education in underutilized States and Territories (section 101(a)(107)). If this legislation were enacted, what impact would this have on DOD's ability to conduct research in underutilized States such as Rhode Island?

Mr. MICHAEL. My understanding is that the Defense Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (DEPSCoR) program works to increase research capacity at universities that have not worked with the Department much in the past. If confirmed, I would make sure that the Department is engaging with such universities as much as possible to help researchers there better align with DOD research priorities and better understand how to work with the Department. The Department's research efforts can only benefit from having more universities to work with. Based on what I know about the DEPSCoR program, I would intend to be very supportive of the DEPSCoR program.

37. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Michael, would the impact be similar for other underutilized States?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes, my understanding is that if the DEPSCoR program is eliminated, all States that participate in the program would be similarly impacted.

38. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Michael, do you support eliminating the DEPSCoR Program?

Mr. MICHAEL. Based on what I know about it, I would intend to be very supportive of the DEPSCoR program. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the DEPSCoR program.

#### SCALING PROTOTYPES

39. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Michael, the Pentagon often struggles to transition promising prototypes into large-scale programs. What barriers do you see preventing the rapid fielding of innovative capabilities, and how would you address them to ensure we can operate at scale?

Mr. MICHAEL. An important challenge for emerging solutions is the traditional budget process and the traditional requirements process. The traditional budget process has historically posed significant challenges for small businesses and other innovative organizations seeking to work with the DOD. Flexibility in funding is

critical to accelerate prototyping, transition, and fielding. The APFIT program is an example of a successful model designed to bridge this funding gap.

Acquisition Executives also face barriers when adopting and transitioning new technologies into acquisition programs. Such barriers include the misalignment of technology development with acquisition requirements, program plans that fail to include insertion points, and a lack of funding to incorporate technology transitions.

40. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Michael, how will you work with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and other components to address these challenges?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(A&S) to understand and remove these barriers to technology adoption and transition. I will look to leverage and improve models like the APFIT program to overcome challenges with the budget process and accelerate solutions in partnership with the USD(A&S). I will engage with user representatives and the Joint Staff early in the requirements process and encourage a re-evaluation of how the requirements process works. I will be well positioned to assist the USD(A&S) with identifying and addressing technical risks across the development lifecycle.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

ETHICS

41. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

42. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if you are confirmed, will you commit to not engaging in any lobbying activities, including unregistered “shadow” or “behind-the-scenes” lobbying under the guise of consulting or advising on DOD-related matters, focused on DOD or any of its components for 4 years after leaving DOD?

Mr. MICHAEL. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

43. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. No.

44. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. No, I was never approached.

45. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. No, I was not approached.

46. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. No.

47. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. No.

48. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. No, I was never approached.

49. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if you own any defense contractor stock, will you divest it to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, the Ethics Agreement I signed on March 10, 2025, which was previously provided to the Committee, sets forth my ethics commitments.

50. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what do you consider the role of the press in a democracy?

Mr. MICHAEL. I strongly support a free press as a critical part of democracy.

51. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you think it would be an appropriate use of taxpayer resources to "dig up dirt" on journalists who investigate or criticize you, your office, DOD, or the Trump administration?

Mr. MICHAEL. Absolutely not.

52. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, will you commit not to retaliate, including by denying access to DOD officials or facilities, against news outlets or individual journalists who publish articles that are critical of you, your office, DOD, or the Trump administration?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes.

53. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, how many times have you been accused of sexually harassing, assaulting, or creating a hostile work environment for another individual in a personal or professional capacity? Provide a list of all instances in which you have been accused of sexually harassing, assaulting, or creating a hostile work environment for an individual and the behavior of which you were accused.

Mr. MICHAEL. None.

54. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, have you requested, or has anyone requested on your behalf, that any other person or third party sign a nondisclosure, confidentiality, non-disparagement, or similar agreement regarding your conduct in a personal or professional capacity?

Mr. MICHAEL. No.

55. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, will you voluntarily release any individual from any such agreements before your nomination hearing?

Mr. MICHAEL. Not applicable.

56. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, have you ever paid or promised to pay, or has anyone paid or promised to pay on your behalf, an individual as part of any non-disclosure, confidentiality, non-disparagement, or similar agreement?

Mr. MICHAEL. No.

57. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if the answer to the question above was yes, how much was promised, how much was paid, and what were the circumstances?

Mr. MICHAEL. Not applicable.

58. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, will you commit to recuse yourself from all particular matters involving your former clients and employers for at least 4 years?

Mr. MICHAEL. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

59. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, will you commit to not seeking employment, board membership with, or another form of compensation from a company that you regulated or otherwise interacted with while in government, for at least 4 years after leaving office?

Mr. MICHAEL. I will abide by the extensive post-Government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my ethics agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably and I will seek any post-Government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

60. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, would it ever be appropriate to threaten or imply that you would withhold future contracts from a company if they filed a complaint, bid protest, or cooperated with an Inspector General, civil, or criminal investigation?

Mr. MICHAEL. No, that would not be appropriate.

61. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you think it is valuable to encourage competition and innovation in the defense industrial base?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes, I believe that it is valuable to encourage competition and innovation in the defense industrial base. congressional Oversight and Transparency

62. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what is your understanding of the role of the Department of Defense Inspector General and service Inspectors General?

Mr. MICHAEL. It is my understanding that the role of the Department of Defense Inspector General is to conduct independent audits and investigations relating to DOD's programs and operations to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness and to prevent and detect fraud and abuse. It is my understanding that the Service Inspectors General perform similar functions, independently assessing for the Secretaries of the Military Departments matters such as economy, efficiency, and readiness.

63. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. Yes.

64. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I will work to comply with Inspector General requests in a timely manner. I would defer to the Office of the Inspector General to update members of the Committee regarding the progress of the Inspector General's ongoing reviews.

65. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if you are confirmed, will you commit to refusing to follow illegal orders from any individual, including the President?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I will follow the law and the Constitution of the United States.

66. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what actions would you take if you were given an illegal order from any individual, including the President?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I would have a duty not to carry out a manifestly unlawful order.

67. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, will you commit to testify or provide a deposition if you are called upon by Congress to provide a deposition voluntarily?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes.

68. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, will you commit to testify or provide a deposition to Congress if you are issued a subpoena to testify?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes.

69. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, will you commit to providing information or documents to Congress voluntarily if you are requested to do so?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes.

70. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, will you provide information or documents to Congress if you are issued a subpoena?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes.

71. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. Yes.

72. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if confirmed, will you commit to posting your official calendar monthly?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed I will commit to transparency consistent with the law. For example, if my official calendar is requested pursuant to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, I will commit to releasing responsive agency records subject to any withholding under applicable FOIA exemptions.

73. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you think DOD has an overclassification problem? If so, please provide this committee with an estimate of the number or percentage of documents that will be under your purview that are overclassified.

Mr. MICHAEL. I believe the Department has done a tremendous amount of work to reduce overclassification and ensure that information is properly classified and declassified in accordance with Executive Order 13526. Despite these past efforts, it is my understanding that overclassification persists at the Department, though the exact extent of overclassification is not well understood by me at this time. If confirmed, I will work with the USD(I&S) to support investment in tools to assist in accurate classification—like machine learning and AI—which have shown promise in reducing human error and should be further employed to improve the classification, marking, and declassification of the Department's sensitive information.

74. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, to the best of your knowledge, is your service or component identifying records for proactive posting in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act? If not, please describe how you would ensure that they do so to comply with public records law.

Mr. MICHAEL. I have not been briefed on the organization's compliance posture with the Freedom of Information Act. However, I fully support complying with all public records laws and would ensure the OUSD(R&E) follows these laws.

75. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if confirmed, do you think your department should pursue strategic technology to support automated declassification?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about strategic technologies that hold promise to improve business practices and make information sharing at the appropriate classification level more efficient.

#### PROJECT 2025

76. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. No, I was never approached.

77. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. No, I was never approached.

#### NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MISSILE DEFENSE

78. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what do you understand your role to be in ensuring that programs do not reach this significant cost overrun threshold if you are confirmed?

Mr. MICHAEL. I have not been briefed on the details of the Sentinel program. That said, modernizing the nuclear triad is a critical issue for the country. As a statutory member of the Nuclear Weapons Council, the USD(R&E) plays a pivotal role in ensuring the Nation maintains a safe, secure and effective strategic nuclear deterrent

now and in the future. The USD(R&E) also provides independent technical risk assessments for weapon systems, ensuring that acquisition decisions are fully informed by a methodological approach. If confirmed, my role as the USD(R&E) would be to identify technical risks and performance shortfalls across the development lifecycle to inform critical engineering and acquisition decisions. For major programs, this engagement could include assessing technical risks and technical maturity early on, assessing system performance as testing unfolds, and assessing schedule risks as program development proceeds. I look forward to fulfilling that role and ensuring the Department is modernizing to meet future threats.

## FOREIGN INFLUENCE

79. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, have you received any payment from a foreign government or entity controlled by a foreign government within the past 5 years?  
Mr. MICHAEL. No.

80. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, have you communicated with any foreign government or entity controlled by a foreign government within the past 5 years?

Mr. MICHAEL. I have disclosed relevant contacts and communications in my SF-86 and my Senate Armed Services Committee questionnaire.

81. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. I have disclosed relevant contacts and communications in my SF-86 and my Senate Armed Services Committee questionnaire.

## RETALIATION AND PROTECTING WHISTLEBLOWERS

82. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. Yes, all whistleblowers should be protected consistent with the law.

83. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, have you ever retaliated against any individual for coming forward about an illegal order, sexual assault or harassment, negligence, misconduct, or any other concern that they wish to raise?

Mr. MICHAEL. No.

84. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if you are confirmed, will you commit to protecting whistleblowers? If so, please specify how you will do so.

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes, I will protect whistleblowers by fostering a culture of high integrity where everyone knows that we will follow the law.

## IMPOUNDMENT CONTROL ACT

85. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, on January 27, 2025, President Trump's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memo calling for the suspension all Federal financial assistance programs (excluding "assistance provided directly to individuals"). Do you agree with OMB's decision to issue this memo?

Mr. MICHAEL. 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 the 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.

86. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you believe the Secretary of Defense has the legal authority to block the disbursement of funds appropriated by Congress?

Mr. MICHAEL. 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 De-

fense on this matter are informed by the administration's legal positions and advice from the Department's General Counsel's office.

87. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what is your understanding of the Impoundment Control Act (ICA)?

Mr. MICHAEL. 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.

88. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you commit to following the Impoundment Control Act?

Mr. MICHAEL. 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.

89. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. 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 advice the administration's legal positions and from the Department's General Counsel's office.

90. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. 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.

91. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. 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.

92. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, 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. MICHAEL. 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.

93. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you commit to expending the money that Congress appropriates and authorizes?

Mr. MICHAEL. 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 advice the administration's legal positions and from the Department's General Counsel's office.

94. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you commit to following and implementing every provision of the annual National Defense Authorization Act passed into law?

Mr. MICHAEL. I commit, if confirmed, to executing my responsibilities consistent with the Constitution and the law, including the National Defense Authorization Acts.

#### RIGHT-TO-REPAIR

95. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you believe giving DOD access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could advance DOD's readiness?

Mr. MICHAEL. Ensuring DOD's readiness is a critical mission that the Department must undertake. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing how having access to the technical data rights needed to repair equipment could advance DOD's readiness but would want to ensure that the Department is using its maximum power to repair equipment so long as it's more efficient than alternatives.

96. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you believe giving DOD access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could help reduce DOD's repair and sustainment costs?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to exploring ways that the OUSD(R&E) can reduce costs for the DOD and taking appropriate action and would be in favor of exercising all existing rights to repair so long as it's more efficient than alternatives.

97. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, how will you ensure servicemembers in your service or component, who are stationed abroad, can timely and cost-effectively repair equipment when needed, especially in a contested logistics environment?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting OUSD(A&S) in ensuring that servicemembers have the proper training and information to timely and cost-effectively repair equipment, especially in a contested logistics environment.

98. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if you are confirmed, will you commit to including right-to-repair/technical data rights clauses in acquisition contracts that your service or component enters into?

Mr. MICHAEL. My understanding is that the OUSD(R&E) does not enter into acquisition contracts.

99. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if you are confirmed, will you commit to ensuring contractors deliver technical data rights to your service or component when their contract requires or allows it?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the USD(A&S) and the Military Services to use any contractually permissible rights to make repairs more efficient.

100. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if you are confirmed, will you commit to conducting an assessment of the cost of not having the right-to-repair/technical data rights for your service's or component's equipment, the results of which you would make public for review by Congress and the Department of Government Efficiency?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the USD(A&S) and the Military Services to understand the potential benefits of requiring contractors to provide technical data rights to Services or Components.

#### ACQUISITION REFORM

101. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what is your understanding of the Procurement Integrity Act and your obligations under that law?

Mr. MICHAEL. The Procurement Integrity Act prohibits certain activities by personnel involved in the procurement process. If confirmed, I will be responsible for ensuring disclosure, protection, and proper marking of contractor bid or proposal information and source selection information, disqualifying any employee with financial conflicts of interest, and determining the impact of reported violations on pending awards or selections.

102. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you believe that it is important to be able to assess accurate cost and pricing data from contractors, especially for sole-or single-source contracts?

Mr. MICHAEL. I believe it is important to be able to assess accurate cost and pricing data from contractors in order to ensure the DOD is paying a fair price for critical services.

103. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, how do you plan to obtain cost and pricing data from contractors to determine that the cost of DOD contracts is fair and reasonable?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I will want to thoroughly examine the organization's programs, budget, contracts and authorities and solicit feedback from key stakeholders so as to ensure the DOD is paying fair and reasonable costs.

104. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, how do you plan to do so in cases where contractors refuse or claim they are unable to turn over this data?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to fully reviewing these types of issues with the OUSD(A&S) and have the DOD receive as much relevant data as possible to be efficient with taxpayer dollars.

105. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if you are confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that contractors are not price gouging or overcharging DOD?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting OUSD(A&S) should it decide to review any current contracts in order to ensure that fair prices are being paid in exchange for critical services.

106. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if you are confirmed will you commit to seeking refunds from contractors and companies that overcharge DOD?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting OUSD(A&S) should it decide to review any current contracts in order to ensure that fair prices are being paid in exchange for critical services and any refunds due are collected.

107. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if so, how do you plan to do so?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting OUSD(A&S) should it decide to review any current contracts in order to ensure that fair prices are being paid in exchange for critical services with all available DOD resources.

108. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you believe there is excessive consolidation in the defense industry?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to assessing consolidation in the defense industry relevant to research, development, and engineering. It is inarguable that more competition benefits the DOD.

109. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if so, what do you believe to be the ramifications of that consolidation?

Mr. MICHAEL. One of the ramifications of consolidation is the emergence of chokepoints in the supply chain throughout the industrial and critical technology ecosystem, which has led to vulnerabilities in the development of capabilities needed for national defense. In addition, if more consolidation leads to less competition, then its inherently less efficient than the alternative.

110. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if you are confirmed, how will you support competition in the defense industry?

Mr. MICHAEL. Competition has been the lifeblood of U.S. innovation. If confirmed, I would look to remove barriers to entry for new partners in the defense industrial base and to encourage competition.

111. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what do you understand to be the role of independent cost estimates in the acquisition process?

Mr. MICHAEL. Independent and sound cost estimates are vital for effective acquisition decisionmaking and oversight. Cost estimates support efficient resource allocation decisions. Independent cost estimates should encompass all lifecycle costs including development, production, deployment, operations and support, and disposal.

112. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, how should DOD establish program schedules and milestones?

Mr. MICHAEL. I understand that the USD(R&E) provides oversight and analysis on developmental test, test and evaluation master plans, digital engineering approaches and engineering modernization, and independent technical risk assessments. Each of these categories of analysis should inform program schedules and milestones that are technically feasible and realistic.

113. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, would it be appropriate for DOD to establish program schedules to achieve partisan electoral outcomes?

Mr. MICHAEL. It would not be appropriate for DOD to establish program schedules to achieve partisan electoral outcomes.

114. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, should DOD acquisition decisions be influenced by partisan political activities?

Mr. MICHAEL. Acquisition decisions should not be influenced by partisan political activities.

115. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, should DOD acquisition decisions be influenced by individuals with conflicts of interest that involve DOD?

Mr. MICHAEL. Acquisition decisions should not be influenced by individuals with material conflicts of interest that involve DOD.

#### RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

116. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, does DOD benefit from partnering with colleges, universities, nonprofits, and federally funded research and development centers?

Mr. MICHAEL. Maintaining efficient investments in science and technology (S&T) is vital to our Nation's future security. S&T can be used to rapidly mature advanced technology in response to operational need, but it is also the foundation of future military concepts. Collaborating with colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, national labs and federally funded research and development centers are critical to the success of the S&T ecosystem. U.S. research universities and federally funded research and development centers employ some of the top scientific minds from around the world and have been responsible for many transformative research developments in national security-related areas.

117. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, under your leadership, will DOD continue to work with colleges, universities, nonprofits, and federally funded research and development centers to research and address our toughest national security challenges?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to work with colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, and federally funded research and development centers to develop new and transformative capabilities for the Warfighter consistent with the Administration's mission and priorities.

118. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, on March 20, 2025, DOD announced it was terminating \$360 million in grants. What is your understanding of DOD's criteria for canceling grants?

Mr. MICHAEL. I have not been briefed on the Department's grants nor its recent grant cancellation decisions, but I support aligning DOD spending with the Secretary's stated goals of restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding our military by matching threats to capabilities, and reestablishing deterrence by defending our homeland. The Department's grants should align with these priorities.

119. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what should DOD's criteria for canceling grants be?

Mr. MICHAEL. The DOD should focus its resources on essential technologies that will support its core national missions as determined by the Secretary and the Administration. If confirmed, I will ensure that OUSD(R&E) activities align with the Administration's commitment to efficiency and support the military to rebuild and develop capabilities that meet the current threat landscape.

120. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, who should be involved in decisions to cancel DOD grants?

Mr. MICHAEL. Decisions to terminate grant awards may be necessary to ensure that the Department makes the best use of available resources. These decisions are most often made by those responsible for the individual program the grant supports but can also be determined by DOD leadership in accordance with Department priorities or the Administration consistent with its policy objectives.

121. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, does DOD invest enough in research and development?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to assessing whether DOD invests enough in research and development (R&D). Balancing near-term and long-term in-

vestments is a multifaceted challenge that demands addressing immediate warfighting needs while also maintaining long term technical superiority over adversaries. The Department's S&T activities form the basis of new technology components and system capabilities. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the DOD R&D budget to ensure that it is consistent and sufficient to ensure the Department addresses Warfighter needs while investing in securing its technological advantage.

122. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do defense contractors invest enough in research and development?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the R&D investments made by defense contractors to encourage industry to optimally contribute to the Department's future capabilities through their independent R&D investments.

123. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what should DOD's top research and development priorities be?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I will assess the DOD's R&D priorities, including through review of the 14 Critical Technology Areas, and help ensure that the Department is delivering on the priorities it establishes consistent with the missions the Administration has articulated.

#### DEFENSE ESTABLISHED PROGRAM TO STIMULATE COMPETITIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

124. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, the FORGED Act calls for eliminating the Defense Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (DEPSCoR) Program, a capacity-building program designed to strengthen the basic research infrastructure at institutions of higher education in underutilized States and Territories (Sec. 101(a)(107)). If this legislation were enacted, what impact would this have on the Department of Defense's ability to conduct research in underutilized States such as Rhode Island?

Mr. MICHAEL. My understanding is that the Defense Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (DEPSCoR) program works to increase research capacity at universities that have not worked with the Department much in the past. If confirmed, I would make sure that the Department is engaging with such universities as much as possible to help researchers there better align with DOD research priorities and better understand how to work with the Department. The Department's research efforts can only benefit from having more universities to work with. Based on what I know about the DEPSCoR program, I would intend to be very supportive of the DEPSCoR program.

125. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, would the impact of this legislation be similar for other underutilized States?

Mr. MICHAEL. Yes, my understanding is that if the DEPSCoR program is eliminated, all States that participate in the program would be similarly impacted.

126. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, do you support eliminating the DEPSCoR program?

Mr. MICHAEL. Based on what I know about it, I would intend to be very supportive of the DEPSCoR program. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the DEPSCoR program.

#### PROTECTING CLASSIFIED INFORMATION AND FEDERAL RECORDS

127. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what is your understanding of the need to protect operational security, or OPSEC?

Mr. MICHAEL. Operations Security is practiced to deny adversaries the opportunity for an advantage over U.S. forces. Proper OPSEC protects critical information and the mission and the men and women executing it.

128. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what are the national security risks of improperly disclosing classified information?

Mr. MICHAEL. It is generally accepted that the improper or unauthorized disclosure of classified information could be expected to cause identifiable or describable damage to national security. The describable damage and certainty of that damage would depend on the details of the information released, including the level of classification, as well as the extent and nature of the disclosure. Determining the extent of damage to national security is part of the unauthorized disclosure process as outlined in DOD policy, and I would defer to the Department for additional specifics.

129. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, is it your opinion that information about imminent military targets is generally sensitive information that needs to be protected?

Mr. MICHAEL. The Department has robust policies and processes dedicated to determining the sensitivity of information related to military targets. If confirmed, I will ensure that myself and those under my organizational control will adhere to those processes and standards.

130. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what would you do if you learned an official had improperly disclosed classified information?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I would report any such incident, or suspected incident, to the appropriate security office. It is the responsibility of all DOD personnel—military, civilian, contractors—to promptly report security incidents, including unauthorized disclosures, to ensure that such incidents are properly examined and that necessary actions are taken to mitigate adverse effects of the loss of control of classified information. Regardless of intent or culpability, unauthorized disclosures of classified information are anathema to protecting our Nation and our troops.

131. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, what is your understanding of Government officials' duties under the Federal Records Act?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I will adhere to the Federal Records Act and the applicable DOD policies that implement it, which ensure that the Federal records I create or receive are appropriately maintained.

132. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, should classified information be shared on unclassified commercial systems?

Mr. MICHAEL. As per the DOD's Information Security Program, only systems approved and accredited for Classified National Security Information may be used for classified communications.

133. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, is it damaging to national security if the pilots flying a mission find out that the official who ordered them to perform that mission shared sensitive information that could have made it more likely that the mission would fail or they would be killed?

Mr. MICHAEL. The Department of Defense places the utmost importance on mission success and the safety of the men and women carrying out the mission, making it the finest fighting force in the world. If confirmed, I will endeavor to carry on that tradition of excellence supporting the men and women of the armed forces in my role as the USD(R&E).

134. Senator WARREN. Mr. Michael, if you had information about the status of specific targets, weapons being used, and timing for imminent U.S. strikes against an adversary, under what circumstances would you feel comfortable receiving or sharing that information on an unclassified commercial application like Signal?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I commit to adhering to the information security policies of the Department of Defense. Beyond that, I cannot speculate about my actions in response to hypothetical or uncertain circumstances.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARK KELLY

##### INNOVATION AND MODERNIZATION EFFORTS

135. Senator KELLY. Mr. Michael, defense modernization is a top priority of mine. I co-chair the Defense Modernization Caucus and take the future of the Department very seriously. The technological supremacy the United States held over our adversaries for the past 40 years is rapidly diminishing. It is apparent to many of us that the future of defense based technological innovations rests in artificial intelligence (AI), cyber, quantum computing, advanced microelectronics, and the rapid proliferation of drones. This creates an imperative to leverage innovation across industry. If confirmed, what steps will you take to bridge the gap over the so-called valley of death?

Mr. MICHAEL. I appreciate the important work that the Defense Modernization Caucus is doing to bring more attention and focus to critical technologies. The statute that established the USD(R&E) gave the role the mission of advancing technology and innovation, including by supervising technology transition. Helping to overcome the so-called valley of death is a core statutory responsibility that I am

enthusiastic to address. To leverage innovation across industry, we must address the challenges of revitalizing the industrial base while building a modern and lethal arsenal. This requires matching the appropriate DOD investment or development mechanism to each opportunity. For example, the Office of Strategic Capital seeks to address industrial base and supply chain issues through long-term investments in companies with tremendous up-side for DOD, while development and transition tools like prototyping, experimentation and the APFIT program address the challenge of building modern and lethal capabilities while increasing the size of the defense industrial base, creating competition and opportunities for new and nontraditional defense contractors. Keystone initiatives like the President's Golden Dome air and missile defense system will require systems engineers across the Department to collaborate on architecture and software, in collaboration with the development and acquisition communities. In addition, the Department should reduce duplicative efforts where the private sector has invested dramatically more and achieved breakthrough advancements to adapt or utilize those paid-for innovations for Department use.

136. Senator KELLY. Mr. Michael, one program I worked to establish in NDAA and secured \$500 million in funding for in the CHIPS and Science Act was a program within R&E called the Microelectronics Commons. It created a network of research and development (R&D) facilities across the country dedicated to providing researchers and innovators in the semiconductor industry access to manufacturing-grade capabilities to help test innovative new microchips at scale—bridging the valley of death. That program was established in late 2023 and is already enabling groundbreaking research. Are you familiar with the Microelectronics Commons? If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring R&E remains dedicated to advancing groundbreaking innovations in the semiconductor industry?

Mr. MICHAEL. I understand that the OUSD(R&E) manages the Trusted and Assured Microelectronics program and the Microelectronics Commons and am familiar with the publicly available information on it. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the on-going efforts within the OUSD(R&E) and with interagency partners to ensure that DOD has access to the microelectronics it requires for defense systems and to innovation to ensure the Nation is not dependent on adversaries for such critical capabilities.

137. Senator KELLY. Mr. Michael, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is our pacing threat, they've made incredible technological leaps in hypersonic capabilities. While the Department has made progress, it is lagging behind, and this is just one example of PRC technological investment. We face delays and program management problems across the Department. What steps will you take to ensure the Department maintains technological overmatch?

Mr. MICHAEL. Hypersonic technology development is critical. I expect that the Golden Dome for America effort will galvanize a national effort to develop and field hypersonic systems. I understand that the OUSD(R&E) established hypersonics as a modernization priority and Critical Technology Area in 2018, partly in response to the growing Chinese hypersonic threat. The OUSD(R&E) leads the development of the Department's vision, strategy, and roadmap for hypersonic technologies and works to ensure that Military Service and Defense Agency efforts are consistent with those roadmaps. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Department's hypersonic activities, including those that will support the Golden Dome.

138. Senator KELLY. Mr. Michael, how will you direct the Department to foster innovation across broad ecosystems to deliver new technology to the field and present rapidly deployable technological solutions?

Mr. MICHAEL. It is critical that the Department innovates more quickly and with more efficiency. If confirmed, I will look for opportunities to implement, as appropriate, best practices that I've used in the private sector to drive innovation at speed and with efficiency throughout the organization. As a starting place, I would attempt to alter an overly risk adverse culture. To benefit from an innovative culture, it must be understood that there is knowledge to be gained from experimental failures, and without such failures, the pace of innovation will necessarily be slow. I am committed to working with Congress to develop newer, higher quality and more efficient systems for the warfighter. Further, where commercially available technology exists, the Department needs to remove unnecessary barriers to adopt it if it will save time and money.

SEMICONDUCTOR INNOVATION AND INTEGRATION INTO DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S  
ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT SYSTEMS

139. Senator KELLY. Mr. Michael, as you both know, DOD has struggled to utilize commercial leading-edge semiconductors in DOD acquisition programs because the pace of innovation moves faster than our procurement process. In recent years, and with the support of this Committee, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has carried out several programs to address this program, including the Rapid Assured Microelectronics Prototypes—Commercial (RAMP-C) program, the State-of-the-Art Heterogeneous Integrated Packaging (SHIP) program, and the Joint University Microelectronics Program (JUMP). How would you access the success of these programs?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency's (DARPA) work on microelectronics. It is critical that the Nation maintains its technological edge in microelectronics and DARPA has historically proven capable of being part of important successes.

140. Senator KELLY. Mr. Michael, what are the next steps R&E and DARPA should be taking to build upon the success of these research and development programs and integrate their funding into DOD procurement processes?

Mr. MICHAEL. It is my current understanding that DARPA executes its high-risk model because of the existence of the Military Service S&T organizations that diligently pursue more evolutionary, requirements-driven research. While the Military Service laboratories frequently provide the "Plan A" baseline for program advancements, DARPA offers a disruptive "Plan B," that if successful, creates leap-ahead capabilities, accelerated timelines, and/or dramatically reduced costs. Sometimes, DARPA proves that a new technological vector is possible but needs the Military Service laboratories to carry out the maturation and system application work necessary to scale the new technology. The key to making these handoffs effective is ensuring that the Military Services embrace DARPA's unique mission and have the budget flexibility to be able to quickly pivot to new DARPA-discovered opportunities if it's the best solution for our warfighters regardless of the source of such innovation. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about DARPA's approach to, and record of, technology transition to the Military Services.

Senator Tammy Duckworth

QUANTUM TECHNOLOGIES

141. Senator DUCKWORTH. Mr. Michael, what is your perspective on how you would prioritize and drive the adoption of quantum technologies to enhance the effectiveness of the warfighter?

Mr. MICHAEL. Quantum science is a Critical Technology Area for the Department with many applications and with great promise from industry. I understand that the Department continues to pursue quantum science and its applications—from better clocks and sensors to the potential of quantum computation. If confirmed as the Department's Chief Technology Officer, I look forward to learning more at the classified level and ensuring that the Department has the technological advantage in this critical field.

142. Senator DUCKWORTH. Mr. Michael, to date, the Department of Defense has made initial investments to advance quantum capabilities. Should you be confirmed, can I get your commitment to not only continue these efforts but also to ensure sustained Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)-level investments that align with DOD priorities?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Department's investments in quantum capabilities. I will support appropriate investments that align with DOD priorities.

143. Senator DUCKWORTH. Mr. Michael, would you commit to taking a proactive role in collaborating with the individual services to identify and integrate the most promising quantum applications that directly enhance warfighter effectiveness?

Mr. MICHAEL. Quantum science is currently a Critical Technology Area with great potential. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Military Services on technology transition opportunities.

BIOINDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURING

144. Senator DUCKWORTH. Mr. Michael, biotechnology and biomanufacturing provide innovative tools and capabilities that directly support Department of Defense missions, strengthen domestic supply chains, and reduce reliance on foreign sources for critical materials. Would you commit to providing a timeline outlining BioMADE's plans to deploy all remaining DOD-provided funds allocated, including

timelines for issuing Requests for Proposals (RFPs), selecting sites, and initiating construction or partnership activities?

Mr. MICHAEL. I support efforts to strengthen our supply chains and reduce our reliance on foreign sources of critical materials. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the BioMADE Manufacturing Innovation Institute, its biomanufacturing efforts, and how BioMADE aligns with Department priorities.

145. Senator DUCKWORTH. Mr. Michael, would you be willing to commit to identify a senior official or office within DOD responsible for overseeing and ensuring U.S. leadership in biomanufacturing as a critical technology area?

Mr. MICHAEL. I understand that biotechnology is a designated Critical Technology Area for the Department. As such, there is currently a Principal Director for Biotechnology who is considered the senior official for R&D work in biotechnology, which includes biomanufacturing.

146. Senator DUCKWORTH. Mr. Michael, would you be able to provide a detailed description of the selection criteria BioMADE uses when implementing DOD-funding to support infrastructure investments?

Mr. MICHAEL. If confirmed, I would look forward to reviewing the selection criteria that the BioMADE Manufacturing Innovation Institute uses to support infrastructure investments. Given that many of these programs are classified, I cannot provide an informed answer as of this time.

147. Senator DUCKWORTH. Mr. Michael, can you provide an accounting of how DOD-provided funds and those collected through BioMADE membership fees have been utilized by the institute to date, specifying funded projects, partnerships established, outcomes achieved thus far, and how these expenditures align with broader DOD strategic objectives in biomanufacturing?

Mr. MICHAEL. As a nominee for the USD(R&E), I do not have access to controlled unclassified information. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing and assessing the BioMADE program, to include its accounting, plans, partnerships, and goals and how those align with DOD priorities.

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[The nomination reference of Mr. Emil G. Michael follows:]

**NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT**

**PN12-31**

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:

Emil Michael, of Florida, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering,  
vice Heidi Shyu, 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. Emil G. Michael, which was transmitted by the Committee at the time of the nomination was referred, follows:]

**Emil G. Michael**  
**Nominee, Department of Defense Under Secretary for Research & Engineering**

**Education:**

- Stanford Law School
  - 1995 to 1998
  - Juris Doctor *with honors*
- Harvard University
  - 1990 to 1994
  - Bachelor's Degree in Government, *cum laude*

**Employment Record:**

List all jobs held since college including title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment.

- M8 Enterprises LLC, Miami Beach FL
  - Owner
  - 6/2017 to Present
  - Advisory and consulting business to emerging technology companies
- DPCM Capital, Miami Beach FL
  - Board Director and CEO
  - 11/2020 to 8/2022
  - Special Purpose Acquisition Vehicle that merged with D-Wave Quantum (Ticker: QBTS)
- Uber Technologies, Inc., San Francisco CA
  - Senior Vice President of Business, Chief Business Officer
  - 9/2013 to 6/2017
  - Global ridesharing and delivery company
- Klout, Inc.
  - Chief Operating Officer
  - 7/2012 to 9/2013
  - Social media influence measurement company
- Defense Business Board, Pentagon
  - Member
  - 2014 to 2017
- Office of the Secretary of Defense, Pentagon
  - White House Fellow and Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense

- 9/2009 to 1/2011
- Focus on Secretary Gates' reform efforts and technology projects
- Tellme Networks, Inc.
  - Senior Vice President of Field Operations
  - 1999 to 2008
  - Cloud-based speech recognition software provider (sold to Microsoft in 2007)
- Gemini Consulting C4 Lab
  - Analyst
  - 1994 to 1995
  - Focus on emerging technology areas of computers, communications, content and consumer electronics
- Board Memberships: DPCM Capital (former), D-Wave (former), GoBrands, Homebound, Loft Holdings, Oyo Hotels US, Perplexity, Rent The Runway (former) and Workrise

**Honors and Awards:**

- Military Awards: N/A
- Federal Civilian Awards: Secretary of Defense Award for Outstanding Public Service, 2011
- Academic Awards: *Cum laude* graduate, Harvard University; *honors* graduate, Stanford Law School
- Other Awards: One of Fast Company's "Most Creative People," 2014

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[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. Emil G. Michael in connection with his nomination follows:]

119<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, 2025 -- 2026  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
ROOM SR-228  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-6050  
(202) 224-3871

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES QUESTIONNAIRE  
INFORMATION REQUESTED OF CIVILIAN NOMINEES

**INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE:** Answer all questions and provide all requested information. If more space is needed, attach an additional sheet of paper to the Questionnaire and cite the part of the Questionnaire and the question number (e.g., A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies. Unless otherwise required, an answer of "yes", "no", or "not applicable" is appropriate.

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART A

**NOTE:** Information furnished in this part of the Questionnaire will be made available in Committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearing, if any, and will be entered in the hearing record, also available to the public.

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC**

1. **Name (Include any former names you have used):**  
Emil George Michael
2. **Position to which nominated:**  
Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering
3. **Date of nomination:**  
January 20, 2025
4. **Education (List names of secondary and higher education institution attended, type of school [vocational, technical, trade school, college, university, military college, correspondence, distance, extension, and on-line], dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted):**
  - New Rochelle High School, High School Diploma, 1990

- Harvard College, AB in Government, 9/1990 to 6/1994
- Stanford Law School, JD with Honors 8/1995 to 6/1998

**5. Employment record (List all jobs held since college, or in the last 10 years, whichever is less, including the title or description of the job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment. If the employment activity was military duty, show each change of military duty station as a separate period of employment):**

M8 Enterprises LLC (Self-Employed), 2017 to Present

- Chairman, CEO, President
- Self-employed advisory and consulting practice to technology companies seeking to grow and expand
- Miami Beach, Florida

DPCM Capital, 2020 to 2022

- Board Member and CEO. Self-employed
- Special Purpose Acquisition Vehicle that merged with D-Wave Quantum (Ticker: QBTS)
- Miami Beach, Florida

Uber Technologies Inc., 2013 to 2017:

- Senior Vice President of Business, Chief Business Officer
- Uber provides a mobile application to arrange safe rides to people and food delivery from restaurants
- San Francisco, California

**6. Have you ever received approval, pursuant to section 908 of title 37, United States Code, to accept civil employment (and compensation for that employment), payment for speeches, travel, meals, lodging, registration fees, or a non-cash award from a foreign government?**

No

**7. Government experience (List any advisory, consultative, honorary, and other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed in response to question 5, above):**

- Defense Business Board Member, 2014 to 2017
- Department of Defense, White House Fellow and Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, 2009 to 2011
- Department of Justice, Antitrust Division Summer Intern, 1997

**8. Business relationships (List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, and of any educational or other institution):**

- Workrise, Board Member
- GoBrands, Board Member
- Homebound, Board Member
- Perplexity, Board Member
- Loft Holdings, Board Member
- Oyo Hotels US, Board Member
- NimbleRX, Advisor
- Collaborative Robotics, Advisor
- Ankorstore, Advisor
- Counsel AI, Advisor
- Bond Capital, Advisor
- Thursday Ventures, Advisor
- Pamoja Ventures, Advisor
- 1Money, Advisor
- Binance US, Advisor
- Radical Group, Advisor
- Motive, Advisor
- Kalshi, Advisor
- Kyle, Advisor
- Pearpop, Advisor
- Brex, Advisor
- 1Money, Advisor
- NimbleRx, Advisor
- Dr. B, Advisor
- Vise, Advisor
- Zima International, Advisor
- Campus Group, Advisor
- Omio, Advisor
- Pietra, Advisor
- Tools for Humanity, Advisor
- Owner of Personal Businesses (M6 Enterprises LLC, M8 Enterprises LLC, M9 Enterprises LLC, M10 Enterprises LLC)
- Nomadic Ventures, Co-Owner
- Family Trusts #1, #2

**9. Memberships (List all memberships and offices that you currently hold, as well as any memberships and offices you have previously held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable and other organizations):**

- Sigma Chi, Harvard Chapter President
- Harvard Republican Club, President
- Michael Family Foundation
- Fisher Island Club
- ZZ Club
- Harbour Club
- Soho House
- The Battery Club

10. Political affiliations and activities:

If you have ever been a candidate for, or have been elected or appointed to a political office, list the name of the office(s); whether you were a candidate/elected/appointed; the year(s) during which you were a candidate, or in which the election was held or the appointment was made; and the term of office (if applicable):

No

List all memberships and offices held in, and services rendered to, all political parties or election committees during the last 5 years:

Trump-Vance Transition Committee, 2024

Itemize all individual political contributions of \$100 or more to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity during the past 5 years. List each individual contribution (not the total amount contributed to the person or entity) over this period:

- Joe Sanchez, Candidate for Miami Dade County Sheriff, \$1,000, 5/6/2024
- Salazar for Congress, \$3,300, 3/19/2024
- Salazar for Congress, \$3,300, 3/19/2024
- Salazar Victory Committee, \$6,600, 3/14/2024
- MAGA Inc., \$1,000,000, 2/28/2024
- Stephen Meiner, Mayoral Candidate Miami Beach, \$1,000, 10/16/ 2023
- Stephen Meiner, Mayoral Candidate Miami Beach, \$1,000, 11/12/2023
- Michael Greico, Mayoral Candidate Miami Beach, \$1,000,10/25/2023
- Bill Roedy, Mayoral candidate Miami Beach, \$1,000 on 9/30/2023
- Suarez for President, Inc., \$3,300 7/17/2023
- SOS America PAC: \$10,000, 5/31/2023
- Salazar Victory Committee, \$2,900, 5/23/2022

- Salazar Victory Committee, \$5,800, 5/23/2022
  - Attorney General Raul Torrez PAC (RNML), \$10,000, 5/5/2022
  - Brady Duke for Congress, \$500, 2/7/2022
  - Candidate for Attorney General Raul Torrez, \$5,200, 9/19/2021
  - Candidate Elizabeth Caputo, \$1,500, 2/2/2021
  - Perdue for Senate, \$2,800, 12/2/2020
  - Salazar for Congress, \$5,600, 6/25/2020
11. **Honors and awards (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements):**
- Academic Awards: *Cum laude* graduate, Harvard University; *honors* graduate, Stanford Law School
  - Other Awards: Secretary of Defense Award for Outstanding Public Service, 2011; One of Fast Company's "Most Creative People," 2014
12. **Published writings (List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, or other published materials that you have written or for which you served as co-author or editor, including articles and blogs published on the internet):**
- "4 Key Principles for Business Leadership in the Fledgling 2020s," Big Think (Oct. 2023), <https://bigthink.com/business/4-key-principles-for-business-leadership-in-the-fledgling-2020s/>
  - "How to Hire the Right Executive in a Post-Pandemic World," Forbes (Jan. 2022), <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2022/06/08/how-to-hire-the-right-executives-in-a-post-pandemic-world/>
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).**

None

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[The nominee responded to Parts B-F of the Committee questionnaire. The text of the questionnaire is set forth in the Appendix to this volume. The nominee's answers to Parts B-F are contained in the Committee's executive files.]

**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.




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Emil G. Michael

This 20<sup>th</sup> day of Mar, 2025

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[The nomination of Mr. Emil G. Michael was reported to the Senate by Chairman Wicker on April 8, 2025, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on May 14, 2025.]

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[Prepared questions submitted to Mr. Keith Bass 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 Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD(HA))?

*Answer.* The ASD(HA) is the advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness for health policy and medical resources as well as leader of the Military Health System (MHS). The ASD(HA) has authority, direction, and control over the Defense Health Agency (DHA) and Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) and, working with the Military Departments and Joint Staff, oversees all DOD medical capabilities, medical personnel, and medical readiness.

*Question.* If confirmed, what duties and functions do you expect the Secretary of Defense to prescribe for you?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I expect the Secretary of Defense to charge me with stabilizing and modernizing the MHS. I will support rebuilding our warfighter ethos by increasing medical force generation and sustainment through improved military and civilian staffing at military medical treatment facilities (MTFs) and more integrated relationships with Federal and private sector partners.

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

*Answer.* I spent two decades in uniform, both as an enlisted sailor and officer in the Navy, aboard ships, supporting humanitarian missions, in MTFs, at the White House, intelligence headquarters, and the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. After retiring from Active Duty, I served in executive leadership roles in the private sector before returning as a civilian hospital leader at the Department of Veterans Affairs. These experiences gave me a deep understanding at all levels of the MHS and military medicine.

MAJOR CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

*Question.* In your view, what are the major challenges confronting the next ASD(HA)?

*Answer.* With the increasing cost of health care, the most significant challenge is improving medical readiness in a resource constrained environment. As briefed recently in open testimony, DOD needs to quickly stabilize the MHS to rebuilding medical capabilities and improve readiness.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you address each of those challenges? Please be specific in your responses.

*Answer.* I support continuing to stabilize and optimize the MHS by more appropriately staffing the MTFs and strengthening our partnerships with other Federal health care systems and leading private sector health care organizations. I also believe that we need to improve our medical logistics to better supply equipment, supplies, and pharmaceuticals to our MTFs and operational medical missions.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would be your top priorities for the military health system (MHS)?

*Answer.* My top priorities for the MHS would be improving medical readiness, stabilizing the MHS, and focusing on mental health and suicide prevention. The MHS underwent tremendous transformation over the past decade. It is now time to use these modernizations to refocus efforts on generating, sustaining, and maintaining medical readiness at MTFs, operational units, and partnerships. I understand that there are significant fiscal constraints in and long-term underfunding of the MHS and my priority will be to ensure we are maximizing the return on investment of current resources.

#### RELATIONS WITH CONGRESS

*Question.* What are your views on the State of the relationship between the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (OASD(HA)) and the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

*Answer.* The relationship to the Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Congress broadly, is one of the most important relationships for the ASD(HA). The House and Senate represent the will of the people, and moreover represent the constituency of millions of TRICARE beneficiaries. In my view, it is vital that the ASD(HA) has a strong, open, transparent, and trusting relationship with the Senate Armed Services Committee and the whole of Congress. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power to ensure this relationship is strengthened, robust, and enduring.

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and the OASD(HA)?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure that the relationship between Congress and the OASD(HA) builds on trust and transparency. I pledge that Congress will have open lines of communication to the OASD(HA), that we provide regular updates, and respond to inquiries or requests for information. If confirmed, I will also continue to participate in regular updates to the House and Senate Armed Services Committee, as I understand is the current practice of the OASD(HA) and the Director of the Defense Health Agency.

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you position the MHS to support more fully the Department's National Defense Strategy?

*Answer.* It is my understanding from earlier testimony that Defense Department has not fully utilized the potential of industrial and innovation bases to deliver necessary military capabilities efficiently and at the required pace of the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I will improve how we resource and staff medical capabilities, including more agile and modernized contracting practices, medical industrial base policy, and holistic assessments of military and civilian medical personnel resources in the MHS.

*Question.* If confirmed, what immediate changes would you make in the MHS to better support the National Defense Strategy?

*Answer.* If confirmed, first and foremost I will look at the footprint, policies, and resources of the MHS to ensure it best aligns to the National Defense Strategy. I will overlay the DOD's medical go-to-war, combat casualty, and readiness requirements with opportunities for collectively sharing resources with other Federal partners and working with the civilian sector where appropriate. I will then look at all the revenue streams into the MHS to make sure we are most efficiently maximizing the use of all the resourcing opportunities.

#### JOINT MEDICAL ESTIMATE AND COMBAT CASUALTY CARE

*Question.* The most recent Joint Medical Estimate, required by section 732 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019, identified significant concerns related to the Military Health System's ability to provide required care to injured personnel in certain combat scenarios and the Department's contested medical logistics capabilities.

If confirmed, how would you evaluate and mitigate the risks identified in the Joint Medical Estimate within the MHS?

Answer. As I understand it, the Defense Department recently implemented new policy to take an enterprise-wide perspective to address, analyze, and mitigate risks identified by the Joint Medical Estimate. This would be a significant evolution for the MHS. I believe continuing to implement these new policies will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of planning, programming, and budgeting for the Unified Medical Budget and Defense Health Program. If confirmed, I will use these policies to drive strategic change to improve the allocation of taxpayer resources to rebuilding military medical capabilities to support our warfighters, including the world's most advanced aeromedical evacuation and medical logistics.

*Question.* In the September 16th, 2020 issue of JAMA Surgery, Dr. Jeremy Cannon, a retired Air Force trauma surgeon, and current faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, warned of the "peacetime effect" that happens when the military medical establishment returns home at the conclusion of a major conflict. He wrote, "Once fighting ends, wartime surgeons and medical specialists disperse, casualty care systems dismantle, military-specific publications in the medical literature significantly decline, and the focus on injury-related education and training wanes. During these times, Military Health System (MHS) leaders prioritize the mission of wellness among active duty members and other beneficiaries over combat-relevant training. Then, when the military mobilizes for the next war, the MHS is ill-equipped for combat and its members are unprepared to manage casualties." We see this occurring now at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, the Department's premier military hospital.

Do you believe the MHS is adequately focused on combat-related medical capability?

Answer. We know that the peacetime effect is very pronounced across the MHS. As described above, I believe the MHS needs to rebuild medical readiness and combat-related medical capabilities. The MHS really needs to refocus its strategy and modernizations to improve support to the Combatant Commands and our warfighters downrange.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you ensure the MHS is properly prepared to avoid the consequences of the "peacetime effect" in the next major conflict?

Section 735 of the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 established the Indo-Pacific Medical Readiness Program. In recognition of the importance of medical readiness in this Combatant Command area of responsibility, as well as the vast geographical distances involved, this section provides for accreditation of foreign medical facilities and procedures to facilitate access to such facilities by U.S. personnel. This new initiative also reflects the need for effective partnering with allies to improve medical readiness.

Answer. If I am confirmed, I would need to understand why we are unable to fully generate and sustain our medical forces. From recent testimony and reports, I know that DOD's largest medical platforms do not have the staff, supplies, and resources to reattract complex care. Without these complex patients, our providers and health care teams will naturally lose their skillsets. We have an opportunity as a Nation to train our medical personnel with our Allies and partners while simultaneously sustaining and maintaining clinical skills by partnering with medical facilities in these host countries. Doing so gives our medical forces training nearer to the fight, an understanding of the challenges they may face, and helps our Allies and partners advance their own capabilities.

*Question.* Will you commit to working with the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, and other DOD components to implement effective collaboration and partnering with medical systems of allies to improve medical readiness?

Answer. Yes, I commit to working closely and better integrating health policy and medical capabilities with the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, Military Departments, DHA, and USUHS to improve collaboration across the DOD, the Federal Government, and our Allies and partners, especially those across the Indo-Pacific's vast geography. We need to make sure that military medical personnel understand and can work inoperably with these Allies and partners, and we must also ensure that our Allies and partners can work with us without degrading the high-quality clinical care we provide to American men and women in uniform.

#### MANAGING THE COST OF HEALTH CARE

*Question.* In your view, what is the greatest threat to the long-term viability of the military health system?

Answer. From my time in uniform and as a civilian health care leader, I believe the greatest threat to the MHS is fiscal instability. Rising health care costs are directly impacting the Department. The MHS must manage growth in health care costs while ensuring medical readiness and the care of our servicemembers, retirees and family members are not compromised. Like other large health systems in the United States, the MHS is confronting significant medical inflation and labor shortages. Unlike other health systems though, the MHS is also confronting the rise of China as a near-peer threat to our military. Getting the funding and resourcing right is the biggest challenge and most important step to rebuilding readiness in the MHS.

*Question.* What is your assessment of the long-term impact of the Department's health care costs on military readiness and overall national security?

Answer. Rising health care costs are a national problem. The Department will continue to provide a robust health benefit to attract and retain military personnel as well as for those who dedicate their lives and careers to the military. As these costs rise above the average growth rate of the Department's topline budget, there is the real risk that rising health care costs will compete with resources needed to invest in other warfighting platforms and Department-wide organizational reforms. To alleviate these burdens, DOD must continue to transform and modernize the MHS to improve effectiveness while realizing efficiencies by reducing less productive and unnecessary redundancy.

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions would you take to address the effect of the Department's medical costs on the Department's top-line budget, while simultaneously implementing programs to improve health outcomes and to enhance the experience of care for all beneficiaries?

Answer. If confirmed, I will lead the ongoing modernization of the MHS with renewed focus on effectiveness, infrastructure, and staffing. I will advocate for the appropriate budget while searching for efficiencies to ensure we are good stewards of the taxpayer's funding. There is a delicate balance between maintaining a focus on professional development, quality of care goals, and the primary focus of combat casualty care.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would you do to create a value-based military health system—a system that delivers quality health care and improves health outcomes for beneficiaries at reasonable costs both to beneficiaries and to the Department?

Answer. We need a MHS that delivers on its unique value to the Nation: a health care system that sustains fighting forces, deploys into combat and contested environments, receives combat casualties, and provides day-to-day health care for 9.5 million beneficiaries. If confirmed, I will accelerate efforts to become a value-based care system by ensuring accurate requirements and resourcing strategies based on readiness and health outcomes for both direct care and private sector care.

#### SPACE AVAILABLE CARE

*Question.* Federal law generally limits the authority of the Secretary of Defense to provide access to military treatment facilities (MTF) to military personnel and covered TRICARE beneficiaries. In certain circumstances MTFs may provide care on a "space available" basis when such care would not interfere with access to care for covered beneficiaries.

What is your view of the availability of space available care for non-covered personnel (e.g. civilian employees, contractors, their families)?

Answer. The MHS exists first and foremost to provide, support, and promote military readiness. ASD(HA) has a role in providing medical capacity for the Total Force, including civilian employees and contractors who work at military installations in rural, remote, and austere locations. However, the MHS continues to remain focused on our Servicemembers, their families and dependents, and retirees, while increasing volume to the maximum extent possible to maintain the appropriate skills for our providers and staff. As always, the MTFs will remain available to provide emergency care on military installations.

*Question.* Do you believe the Department of Defense should expand the availability of space available care for non-covered beneficiaries?

Answer. With on-going medical personnel labor shortages across the United States, I am hesitant to recommend expanding availability of space available care without looking into this further. I believe the Department could increase space available care to non-covered beneficiaries where it makes sense from a readiness perspective. Brooke Army Medical Center in my home State of Texas is a good example of a partnership with the local community to provide trauma services for non-covered beneficiaries to generate, sustain, and maintain ready medical forces.

*Question.* How should the DHA account, and in what circumstances should it waive payment, for the provision of space available care to non-covered beneficiaries?

*Answer.* I believe that waiving payment for space available care to non-beneficiaries should be limited to those whose health care directly contributes to medical readiness or those who are truly uninsured and unable to pay. This perspective supports the intent of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Section 716, “Improvements to processes to reduce financial harm caused to civilians for care provided at military medical treatment facilities.”

#### MEDICAL PROVIDER PRODUCTIVITY

*Question.* If confirmed, what would you do to improve provider productivity in the MHS?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure manpower models are realistic and standardized, especially with respect to provider-to-support staff ratios by specialty area. I will ensure we have the proper support staffing to help facilitate care, reduce administrative burdens to focus on patient care, and reduce burn out. These manpower models must also support determinations of the optimal military and civilian medical force mix required to support deployments while also maintaining continuity of operations within our MTFs.

*Question.* How does low provider productivity impact beneficiaries’ access to care?

*Answer.* Provider productivity is very complex. I believe the biggest issues with access to care for DOD beneficiaries are staffing shortages, administrative processes, and cumbersome technology. Without whole teams and state-of-the-art support, we cannot expect our providers and clinical staff to be optimally effective and efficient. We must ensure we have proper support staff.

*Question.* In your view, is provider productivity impacted by the Department’s inability or failure to provide adequate administrative or ancillary clinical resources to relieve providers of administrative burdens that may limit their time for patient encounters?

*Answer.* From my own time in uniform and experience as a health care leader, administrative and ancillary support is critical to provider productivity. There are far too many examples of physicians triaging their own patients or even surgeons wheeling patients into surgery. We need to allocate the workforce to improve the efficiency of health care across the MHS, which starts by establishing accurate, realistic requirements and resourcing the right personnel to best fill those requirements.

*Question.* In your view, how does medical procedure volume and complexity relate to the readiness of military medical providers to provide casualty care in a deployed environment?

*Answer.* Medical procedure volume and complexity is critical to ensuring the readiness of military medical providers and health care teams. Studies show that providers who have higher medical procedure volume and complexity achieve better patient outcomes. We want providers to practice the full scope of their credentials and privileges to maintain their clinical skills. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department continues efforts to increase the volume and complexity of care provided in its military medical treatment facilities to support case mix in critical wartime specialties.

*Question.* In your view, do all current MTFs serve as operational medical readiness training platforms? Please explain.

*Answer.* Yes, in my view as a hospital leader and a retired Naval officer, I believe MTFs support the mission as training platforms. It is my understanding that the Department continues to focus on medicine and surgical specialty capabilities at its largest MTFs to ensure sufficient volume and case mix are available to support providers and health care teams with critical wartime clinical currency. If confirmed, I will continue the Department’s efforts to optimize primary and specialty care at MTFs worldwide to better meet readiness requirements.

#### MEDICAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR OPERATIONAL CLINICAL CARE

*Question.* In December 2024, the Government Accountability Office issued a report entitled “Military Health Care: Departments Should Update Policies for Providers in Operational Settings Like Field Hospitals and Aircraft Carriers.” This report highlighted the failure of the Military Services to implement requirements of DOD Instruction 6025.13, “Medical Quality Assurance and Clinical Quality Management in the Military Health System,” issued in July 2023. The Defense Health Agency and the Services promised corrective actions.

If confirmed, what actions will you take to ensure that clinical quality assurance requirements are implemented in operational clinics?

Answer. The MHS went through an enormous transformation and there are likely many policies that require updating to conform with the new way of managing and administering military medicine across the DOD. Assuring quality in the deployed environment is a critical task and, if confirmed, I will work toward standardizing clinical quality management across the whole Department no matter where the care is delivered.

#### CIVILIAN HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

*Question.* The recently enacted National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 included a provision that extended until 2030, the Secretary of Defense's ability to utilize exceptional hiring and compensation authority available to the Department of Veterans Affairs under title 38 of U.S. Code. This authority has been available to the Department of Defense for more than two decades, yet this authority has never been implemented despite staffing shortages across the MHS.

If confirmed, how will you utilize so-called "title 38" authority to more effectively recruit and hire civilian health care personnel to staff MTFs?

Answer. I understand the DOD is already applying many of these title 38 authorities to establish special salary rates in specific geographies as well as pay setting for physicians, dentists, and podiatrists. I also know from personal experience at the VA that title 38 is expensive and that there is more to recruiting and retention than pay scales alone. If confirmed, I will continue implementing title 38 authorities where it makes the most strategic sense to reduce the difference in salaries between the DOD, other Federal agencies, and the private sector.

*Question.* Based on your experience with the Department of Veterans Affairs, is there anything else the Department of Defense should be doing to better recruit and retain civilian health care personnel?

Answer. Based on my experience, I think DOD needs to offer competitive compensation and incentive packages, streamline the hiring process, provide enhanced training opportunities for our providers, and we must continue to evaluate their work-life balance.

#### MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM REORGANIZATION

*Question.* Section 702 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 transferred direct oversight and management of military hospitals and clinics from the Services to the Defense Health Agency (DHA).

If confirmed, how will you enhance DHA's operations to ensure the medical readiness of military forces and the readiness of the military medical force?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with key stakeholders to assess and evaluate staffing methodologies and operations to ensure we optimize medical readiness.

In December 2023, the Department of Defense required the Defense Health Agency to reattract "at least 7 percent of available care from the private sector back to MTFs" by December 31, 2026 as the "effective way" to "take care of our people, support the National Defense Strategy, increase clinical readiness, mitigate risk to requirements, and reduce long-term cost growth in private sector care"

*Question.* What is your opinion of the directive to reattract significant numbers of TRICARE beneficiaries to the direct care system?

Answer. I agree with this wholeheartedly. It is crucial to have the necessary volume and complex patients required to maintain skills for a medically ready force. If confirmed, I will evaluate staffing levels and the capacity across our MTFs. I think it is a worthwhile effort to reattract TRICARE beneficiaries to the MTFs. If confirmed, I will ensure that DOD policies support process improvements to MTF manpower requirements as well as making access to care at MTFs easier and more patient centered.

*Question.* In your judgment, how should the MHS determine what services are offered at MTFs rather than in the private sector care network?

Answer. The MHS is becoming a requirements-driven organization, much like other warfighting and combat supporting capabilities and organizations in the DOD. Those requirements for combat support are sometimes incongruent with health care delivery on a day-to-day basis. MTFs should offer services where there is an overlap with combat support and readiness as well as the full spectrum of care at MTFs on installations in austere or remote locations. The MHS can also take advantage of its scale by better deploying virtual health tools to provide care at a distance and across time zones.

*Question.* The same December 2023 directive required the Secretaries of the Military Departments to "primarily prioritize assignment of uniformed medical and dental personnel to MTFs, with the Director of the DHA exercising "operational control over such personnel for the primary duties for which they are assigned."

Do you support prioritizing MTFs for the assignment of military medical personnel?

Answer. I support prioritizing the assignment of military medical personnel where it makes sense from a readiness perspective to improve generating and sustaining ready medical forces and maintaining a medically ready force. If confirmed, I will work with medical manpower subject matter experts in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, and DHA to fully assess the policies regarding the assignment of military medical personnel.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you attempt to balance the staffing needs of the MTFs under the DHA and operational medical needs under the military departments?

Answer. If confirmed, I would take a collaborative approach with DHA, the Services, the Joint Staff Surgeon and Combatant Commands to ensure staffing needs are properly aligned to support the National Defense Strategy.

#### MILITARY MEDICAL TREATMENT FACILITY RESTRUCTURING

*Question.* According to the Defense Health Agency, “There are not enough Active Duty medical personnel, civilian employees, or contractor personnel . . . to meet mission requirements effectively and efficiently for wartime and peacetime operations, contingency planning, and preparedness.” This medical manpower shortage combined with a constrained Defense Health Program budget is forcing DOD to identify potential actions to realign medical manpower to MTFs with more clinical demand, and reduce the scope of services at MTFs on installations where there is sufficient private sector capacity to meet the health care needs of the beneficiary population.

Section 1073d of title 10, United States Code, requires the Secretary of Defense to notify the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives at least 180-days prior to any modification of the scope of medical care provided at any MTF.

If confirmed, do you commit to keeping the Armed Services Committees informed of any changes to medical care offered at particular MTFs as required by law?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to keeping the Armed Services Committees informed of any changes to medical care offered at MTFs as required by law.

*Question.* In your view, when considering whether to modify the scope of services at an MTF, what factors should be of primary importance?

Answer. In my view, there are three critical factors to consider when modifying the scope of services at an MTF: opportunities to generate ready medical forces, operational requirements, and local availability and capacity of private sector care.

*Question.* In your judgment, how can the MHS meet its stated goal to reattract beneficiaries to the direct care system if the DHA is also likely to recommend downsizing or eliminating medical services available at MTFs?

Answer. While I am not aware of specific actions to downsize or reduce medical services, there is a delicate balance between reattracting care and optimizing available services at MTFs. Yes, we need to reattract care. We must maintain the strength of the referral network, staffing to adequately care for patients, and assess and analyze the details to make an informed decision. There are many factors that must be considered when evaluating medical services for downsizing or elimination. The decision is not made lightly. I understand there are significant medical personnel shortages across the MHS. The MHS cannot sustain these shortages and gaps in the long run and will need to make decisions about where best to place limited resources. I do support reattracting beneficiaries where it makes sense, especially in markets with severe access to care issues in the private sector and when such care generates medical readiness.

*Question.* In your view, how could the MHS better match military provider assignments to requirements that may change quickly in a given medical market?

Answer. From what I understand, DOD has a new policy to evaluate human capital distribution across the MHS every year aligned to the planning and programming cycle. From my own experience in uniform, this is a welcome policy change. DOD can now evaluate local market conditions and historic workload trends enterprise-wide to inform its requirements and resourcing of a particular billet. I also understand that the same policy gives more TDY/TAD authority to local leaders to mitigate unexpected staffing gaps.

#### TRICARE CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION

*Question.* The Department’s new TRICARE managed care support contract, known as “T-5,” began health care delivery on January 1, 2025. This contract should improve the accuracy of provider networks, expand patient access to telehealth services, improve the beneficiary appointment process, and provide more

overall access to care. Including all eight option years, these contracts are valued at \$136 billion.

In your view, is the Defense Health Agency adequately resourced to effectively supervise and oversee contracts of this complexity and value?

Answer. If confirmed, I would evaluate the DHA headquarters broadly to determine its resourcing needs. Right now, I do not have enough information to judge whether DHA has the right personnel to supervise and oversee contracts as large and complex as the next-generation T-5 TRICARE contracts.

*Question.* If confirmed, what metrics will you prioritize to ensure the contractors are delivering the promised T-5 improvements?

Answer. As a retired Navy officer, improvements to T-5 are near and dear to me and my family. The improvements promised also directly impact recruiting and retaining our Active Duty Servicemembers. If confirmed, I will prioritize monitoring access to care, including timely referral management and network adequacy, to deliver on promised T-5 improvements.

*Question.* Section 705 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 requires the Department of Defense to implement a “TRICARE Competitive Plans Demonstration Project” in order to create an opportunity for competition for the larger managed care support contracts and to assess a variety of other value-based incentive for the provision of health care services to covered beneficiaries.

What do you believe is the potential value to the MHS of the TRICARE Competitive Plans Demonstration Project?

Answer. I believe in the power of free markets and theory of competition to drive improvement and innovation in the United States. Done right, the TRICARE Competitive Plans Demonstration Project would provide more opportunities for innovation in private sector care delivered to DOD beneficiaries.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure the DHA is adequately awarding contracts and supporting the implementation of the TRICARE Competitive Plans Demonstration Project?

Answer. If confirmed, I would look first at any potential shortcomings in the awards to make sure that the requirements are in the best interest of DOD beneficiaries and the Department. Once those shortcomings or gaps are addressed, I would continue implementing the project and track these lessons learned to inform the next generation of TRICARE contracts.

*Question.* What factors would you consider to determine whether the TRICARE Competitive Plans Demonstration Project should be expanded beyond the two locations currently planned?

Answer. Based on my experience, I would consider beneficiary populations, patient experience, access to care, and costs to the government when considering expanding the TRICARE Competitive Plans Demonstration Project.

#### TRICARE DENTAL PROGRAM (TDP)

*Question.* Section 701 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 required the Defense Health Agency to make numerous improvements to the TRICARE Dental Program, including increasing the number of plan options, establishing a third-party administrator contract for managing plan administrative features, new enrollment options, and a reduction in cost-sharing requirements for junior enlisted personnel. The 2023 provision required the DHA to implement these improvements no later than January 1, 2026. That deadline has been extended by 1 year in the recently enacted National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025.

If confirmed, how will you ensure that the DHA delivers, without any further delay, the modern, innovative TRICARE Dental Program required by law?

Answer. If confirmed, I will closely monitor the DHA’s implementation of these improvements to the TRICARE Dental Program. Dental expenses can quickly mount, and the ASD(HA) must ensure that readiness of our Servicemembers to deploy is not hampered by medical or dental expenses.

#### MHS GENESIS

*Question.* The Department of Defense recently completed its deliberate phased deployment of MHS Genesis, the new electronic health record system (EHR). This careful deployment involved operational testing that identified and facilitated the correction of implementation challenges, facilitating subsequent successful deployments to different health care settings, where other challenges are identified and addressed.

What is your assessment of MHS Genesis?

*Answer.* I understand MHS GENESIS is deployed to 100 percent of garrison locations across DOD both in uniform as well as a civilian outside the DOD. From what I understand, each successive implementation of MHS GENESIS went better, faster, and more efficiently than the last. While there is always room for improvement, I do believe that MHS GENESIS today in the DOD is on a better glidepath than in years past.

*Question.* In your view, how can the Department offer its testing and evaluation capabilities to the VA as it continues to struggle to implement its version of the EHR that is based on the same platform as DOD's EHR?

*Answer.* DoD learned a lot from its successive deployments of the EHR. If confirmed, I would ensure that the lessons learned from the DOD's implementation are cataloged, shared, and transmitted to the VA to help propel its implementation forward. The VA's adoption of the Federal EHR will improve the transition from Active Duty to Veteran status and more effectively integrate health service delivery across the government.

#### MEDICAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

*Question.* What steps will you take to assess the quality and effectiveness of near-term and long-term medical research activities throughout the Department of Defense?

*Answer.* If I am confirmed, one of my key responsibilities will be overseeing the Defense Health Program (DHP) Research, Development, Test and Evaluation (RDT&E) appropriation. If confirmed, I will take steps to ensure a rigorous programmatic and scientific review of all aspects of the portfolio and align investments to the highest operational medical priorities. In addition, to address requirements and to avoid duplicative efforts, if confirmed I will coordinate DHP RDT&E funded activities with the Combatant Commands, Military Departments, Defense Agencies, and other DOD Components using formal governance structures.

*Question.* How will you ensure that the research portfolio represents research areas based upon current military requirements?

*Answer.* DoD needs a diverse and well-balanced research portfolio to support military readiness and mission requirements. The DHP invests in a diverse research portfolio, including combat casualty care, traumatic brain injury, mental health, and other relevant areas that will support current and future military requirements. If confirmed, I will ensure the Department continues to conduct annual reviews and analyses and hold regular governance forums that include the Military Departments, Defense Agencies, and other DOD Components. These efforts leverage formal processes to develop joint requirements and would help the Department align its medical research portfolio with military and mission requirements.

*Question.* How will you ensure that these activities are coordinated with other DOD research activities, such as those at the DOD laboratories, as well as activities in other Federal agencies?

*Answer.* I understand that the Department works hard to ensure that DHP-funded research efforts are coordinated with other DOD research activities and linked with efforts of other Federal agencies. The Department has several formal partnerships with other agencies, such as those with the VA, National Institutes of Health, and the Food and Drug Administration. If confirmed, I will ensure we work within the Department and through our external partnerships to ensure our research activities continue to be closely coordinated with the activities of other DOD components, as well as the research activities of other Federal agencies.

*Question.* Existing law requires medical research activities of the military services to transition to the DHA. Some of the services retain some readiness related research capabilities.

If confirmed, how will you ensure a smooth transition with ongoing research? How will you manage research priorities?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will ensure that research is prioritized based on warfighting needs in close collaboration with the Joint Staff and Military Departments. From what I understand, the research and development capabilities that were Joint or possibly duplicative transferred to the DHA to create an economy of scale. Transitioning these activities was done by function, which means that we would not stop on-going research simply because those leading the work move—everything about the project transfers. I also believe that consolidating these functions creates opportunities for more efficient research aligned to Joint warfighting requirements.

*Question.* The Department of Defense has established a cross-functional team tasked with care, collection, and research related to Anomalous Health Incidents (AHI) in servicemembers stationed abroad.

If confirmed, what will your role be to ensure the continuation of the work of this cross-functional team at DOD?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure that DOD continues researching Anomalous Health Incidents (AHI). I understand that DOD has improved clinical intake processes for AHI patients. Like other important medical research and development in the DOD for new and novel issues, we rely on cross-functional expertise and have a long history of working collaboratively across Components.

*Question.* Pursuant to a Secretary of Defense memorandum dated August 8, 2024, entitled "Department of Defense Requirements for Managing Brain Health Risks from Blast Overpressure," the Department of Defense is taking steps to mitigate blast exposure during combat and training.

If confirmed, how would you work with the Services to assess and address the health effects of new weapons systems as they are developed?

Answer. I understand the DOD has made tremendous strides in advancing information and knowledge of blast overpressure. If confirmed, I will continue working with the Military Departments to ensure we are assessing risks for blast overpressure from new weapons systems while simultaneously mitigating and treating Servicemembers who are exposed to blast overpressure from today's weapons systems.

#### MEDICAL DEVICES AND TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION

*Question.* The Department of Defense uses a number of commercial industry partners to meet its medical technology requirements.

What, if any, reforms need to be made to DOD acquisition and procurement procedures and policies to ensure that DOD can continue to work with leading commercial innovators in medical devices and technologies?

Answer. If confirmed, I will evaluate whether existing authorities are sufficient to meet our long-term needs and facilitate collaboration with commercial innovators in medical devices and technologies. I intend to engage the DHA's Chief Information Officer and the Component Acquisition Executive on any needed reforms that can speed acquisition and implementation of secure commercial solutions for existing or emerging MHS requirements. I will also seek out new opportunities to leverage new or unique authorities, like those of the Defense Innovation Unit, to acquire innovative commercial products, and technologies while still meeting the cyber security standards and intent of free market competition.

#### QUALITY AND SAFETY OF MEDICAL CARE

*Question.* If confirmed, what would you do to ensure that patients get complex surgical treatment from military surgical teams providing treatment in high-volume surgical practices?

Answer. If confirmed, one of my priorities would be ensuring sufficient military staffing at MTFs that generate readiness with high volume, clinical complex surgical cases. Doing so also involves resourcing infrastructure and closing gaps in deferred maintenance to make sure that medical personnel have robust, modern places to deliver care to DOD beneficiaries.

#### MENTAL HEALTH CARE

*Question.* Section 718 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 required DOD to "develop and implement a comprehensive policy for provision of mental health care to members of the armed forces." This was to be done within 180 days of the date of enactment, but has not yet been completed. In the meantime, we have seen high-visibility events suggesting shortcomings in mental health care for members. Further, a December 2024 Defense Health Agency report found that in 2023 mental health disorders were involved in over half (54.8 percent) of all hospital bed days among Active component servicemembers, reinforcing the need for a comprehensive policy on mental health care.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to improve access to mental health care by servicemembers and their families?

Answer. I take mental health care for our Servicemembers and their families very seriously. I also am keenly aware of the access to care challenges and shortages across the United States. If confirmed, I would explore expanding telehealth services across the MHS and prioritizing Servicemembers and their families in rural, remote, or austere locations around the world. There may also be some "home grown" local innovations or process improvements at MTFs that could be expanded across the MHS to increase access to mental health care.

*Question.* In your view, are the Department of Defense's current mental health resources adequate to serve all Active Duty members and eligible Reserve component members and their families, as well as retirees and their dependents?

*Answer.* In my view, no, the DOD's current mental health resources are inadequate to meet the needs of Active Duty Servicemembers, eligible members of the Reserve Component, and other DOD beneficiaries. I think we can also do more and find new innovations. Solving for the lack of providers and support personnel for mental health will take collaboration with industry, academy, and governments across the United States.

*Question.* If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure that sufficient mental health resources are available to servicemembers in theater and to servicemembers and families at home station locations with insufficient community-based mental health resources?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would explore increasing telehealth for mental health care on the battlefield as well as those at home station. I also understand that recent legislation expanded access to telehealth services for mental health care across State lines, making it easier and more convenient for TRICARE beneficiaries living in locations without mental health resources to get care. In addition, I would explore utilizing AI technology to aid in bridging the gap for stateside, OCONUS, or deployed Servicemembers.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you ensure the issuance of a comprehensive policy on mental health care for members of the armed forces without further delay?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would use the oversight authorities of the ASD(HA) to ensure that a comprehensive policy for mental health care access is implemented quickly and efficiently. I would also investigate any anecdotes about access to mental health care issues to ensure that local leaders are following prescribed DOD policy.

*Question.* Section 714 of the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 authorizes DOD to extend medical license portability to TRICARE network providers providing mental health services to members of the armed forces and TRICARE-eligible dependents. This would allow TRICARE network mental health providers to practice across State lines, subject to terms and conditions to be established by DOD. This could help increase the availability of mental health services for military members and families. This section also requires DOD to issue an Interim Final Rule within 180 days from the date of enactment to implement this new authority.

If confirmed, how would you expand tele-behavioral health services throughout the MHS to improve access to mental health care?

*Answer.* I understand that the DOD has begun expanding telehealth for mental health care. If confirmed, I would leverage the progress to ensure that more Servicemembers, their families, and all other beneficiaries have access to these services because they are convenient and effective, especially for those stationed in rural, remote, or austere locations. I would also ensure that communications are clear for mental health care providers in the network now that DOD has been given authority to provide care across State lines, which is potentially a game changer for our Servicemembers and their families.

#### OPERATIONAL MEDICAL FORCE READINESS

*Question.* In your view, what is DHA's role as a Combat Support Agency?

*Answer.* As I understand, DHA's role as a Combat Support Agency (CSA) is to enable the Army, Navy, and Air Force to provide a medically ready force and ready medical forces to Combatant Commands in both peacetime and wartime. As a CSA, DHA also directly supports the Combatant Commands by providing joint logistics, joint planning capabilities, and decisionmaking information. The DHA uses the principles of Ready Reliable Care to advance high reliability practices across the MHS by improving system operations, optimizing the delivery of care, and cultivating a culture of safety. If confirmed, I will ensure DOD's activities are relevant and visible to Combatant Commanders and enhance DHA's integration in Combatant Command plans, exercises, and requirements, including for Role 4 definitive care capabilities.

*Question.* What can DHA do to provide more medical expertise to the Joint Staff and to combatant commands so that medical concerns are addressed in OPLANs, exercises, and other operational readiness activities?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would evaluate the relationship between the DHA, the Joint Staff, and Combatant Commands. As the youngest CSA, I am sure there is ample opportunity for improvement through learning and maturation. I think DHA has a lot to offer, especially with respect to data, analytics, and information needed for planning and exercising operational capabilities.

*Question.* In your view, have the Services and the DHA adequately defined military medical force readiness and developed an appropriate model to determine and project the Department of Defense's costs for medical force readiness?

*Answer.* It is my understanding that the term medical readiness encapsulates both a medically ready force and a ready medical force. In my view, the Military Departments and the DHA are making progress in defining military medical force readiness. The Military Departments and DHA must work together to ensure the medical readiness of the force is maintained. To that end, it is also my understanding that the Department has refined and expanded critical knowledge, skills and ability (KSA) measures to more precisely assess medical readiness. I understand that efforts are currently underway not only to determine the costs of readiness, defined as the cost of sustaining a medically ready force and ready medical force, but also to express the value of MTFs as readiness platforms.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you ensure that staffing models and associated costs to maintain operational medical readiness skills reflect actual combatant command requirements?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would review military medical personnel requirements holistically for both operational missions and institutional forces at MTFs. I will work with the Joint Staff Surgeon, the Military Departments, and the DHA to overlay Combatant Command requirements for military medical personnel with the military medical treatment facility staffing requirements to maintain a medically ready force and a ready medical force. This review would be anchored by KSAs as well as graduate medical education and other professional medical education pipelines. If there is insufficient volume and complexity of caseload at a particular MTF to meet and sustain the KSAs, the DHA should establish agreements with civilian or other Federal facilities to provide alternate venues for skills sustainment. Furthermore, the DHA in its role as a Combat Support Agency is a part of the Joint Staff planning process and can inform updates to medical skill requirements to reflect current operational planning by the Combatant Commands.

*Question.* If confirmed, what would you do to right-size the active medical force requirements of the Department to optimize operational medical force readiness capabilities?

*Answer.* I know from my own experience in uniform that the military medical force must be appropriately sized in order to quickly respond to global operational medical requirements. If confirmed, I will continue ongoing efforts to establish a DOD process to define the medical and dental personnel requirements across the MHS necessary to meet operational medical force needs in accordance with applicable law and policy. I will work with DOD stakeholders to ensure DOD has a robust medical force that can provide the medical capabilities across the full range of military operations when and where needed.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you advocate for outsourcing more beneficiaries' health care services to the private sector when and where it makes sense? How and where would you do that?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will continue the Department's efforts to establish an integrated health care delivery system, which includes identifying where it makes sense to defer or outsource beneficiaries' health care needs to the private sector. I will ensure the Department uses established, patient-centered and standard processes to refer care to the private sector in locations where MTFs do not have available specialties or cannot provide care within access standards.

#### PAIN MANAGEMENT AND OPIOID MEDICATIONS

*Question.* If confirmed, what policies and programs would you implement to improve pain management in the military health system to reduce and eliminate the misuse and/or abuse of opioid medications?

*Answer.* Meaningful responses to the national epidemic of opioid misuse and abuse should include policies and programs that address the root causes of opioid use, overuse, and abuse. If confirmed, I will ensure that MHS pain management capabilities, practices, and policies result in appropriate opioid prescribing. More importantly, if confirmed, I will determine if there are sufficient non-opioid pain management treatments available and that they are applied to pain management care plans for our DOD beneficiaries.

*Question.* In your view, should alternative and complimentary therapies for pain management be considered as benefits under the TRICARE program?

*Answer.* This is an extremely important question that is directly related to the national epidemic of opioid overuse, abuse and overdoses. There has been a rapid evolution of thought and medical evidence to support the utilization of many pain management treatments that were previously termed "alternative" medical thera-

pies. Now referred to as complementary and integrative health, selected therapies such as acupuncture, mindfulness exercises, massage therapy, and movement therapies like yoga have been recognized as safe and effective for pain management by the National Institutes of Health, VA, and, from what I understand, now the DOD. If confirmed, I would support a deliberate and evidence-based practices to increase the availability of many of these pain management therapies for DOD beneficiaries.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

*Question.* In order to exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive timely testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to consult with this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this committee? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, Federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

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[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOM COTTON

PHARMACEUTICAL SUPPLY CHAIN

1. Senator COTTON. Mr. Bass, we rely heavily on China for basic drugs and active pharmaceutical ingredients. In a recent hearing, former military health officials discussed the risks that China can use this dependence to its advantage and withhold needed medical supplies during war. If confirmed, how do we protect our supply chains and divest from China for our pharmaceutical supply chains?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I support ongoing efforts to identify the risks in the pharmaceutical supply chain and focus industrial base policy efforts on reshoring or right shoring those most critical to warfighting and combat operations. I will work

with key stakeholders, both internal and external, to protect our supply chains and our supply chain and reduce dependency on China.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

ANOMALOUS HEALTH INCIDENTS LESSONS LEARNED

2. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Bass, during your tenure at the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) Office of Medical Services in 2020, the CIA established a temporary Anomalous Health Incidents (AHI) cell to coordinate the Agency's response, including medical care, collection, and analysis. In December 2024, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, issued a review on the Agency's response to AHI. In this report, the Committee assessed that the CIA's response to AHIs "contributed to a trust deficit between CIA and portions of its workforce". Witnesses attributed this distrust to the CIA's stigmatization of victims, poor communication, and a lack of transparency. What lessons have you learned from this experience?

Mr. BASS. Without inadvertently disclosing classified information, we at the CIA did not have information to make truly informed decisions on AHI treatment, and the CIA does not have the same robust medical infrastructure to provide health care as the DOD. The detection and treatment of AHIs was led and coordinated by a separate office within the CIA. I am thankful for the ongoing partnership that has since developed between the CIA, DOD, and Department of State to treat all patients affected by AHI. If confirmed, I will continue to strengthen these relationships and ensure timely access to care.

3. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Bass, as the nominee for Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, what steps will you take to ensure that Active Duty members and their families do not face the same stigmatization, poor communication, and lack of transparency?

Mr. BASS. My north star would be ensuring that our Service members, their families, and all DOD beneficiaries have access to the right care at the right time. I believe that the Military Health System has greatly improved its transparency over the years, which improves communication and reduces stigma and, if confirmed, I will continue to maintain and increase transparency as a key tenet of high reliability.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

VACCINES

4. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Bass, you are the current Medical Center Director for the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) West Texas Health Care System. Texas is currently experiencing an unprecedented measles outbreak, infecting hundreds, who are mostly children. So far, it has tragically led to the death of a child and one adult. Ensuring the health and safety of our servicemembers is the responsibility of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, especially for a military that deploys across the world. Will you commit to ensuring our servicemembers have continued access to lifesaving vaccines, such as the MMR [measles, mumps, and rubella], Polio, and COVID-19 vaccines, and those relevant to their military occupational specialty?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I will continue to adhere to the longstanding DOD methods for establishing immunization requirements for our Service members to deploy, including deference to senior mission commanders and waiver processes.

5. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Bass, do you plan on making changes to the DOD Immunization Program, including the Department's long-standing policy of required immunizations?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I do not plan on making any changes to immunization policy and, like all health policy matters, will work with the subject matter experts at the DOD to update guidance as appropriate.

SECURING THE DRUG SUPPLY CHAIN

6. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Bass, national drug shortages, particularly for generics, have weakened the security of the U.S. drug supply chain, impacting our military health system. There are currently over 250 active drug shortages nationwide, mainly because of manufacturing quality issues. Nearly 80 percent of manufacturing facilities for active ingredients in generic drugs are located outside of the United

States, largely in China and India. Given our important obligation to servicemembers and their families, how do you plan to ensure that the DOD procures the highest quality and most effective drugs?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I plan on working internally with relevant stakeholders, buyers, and subject matter experts at the Defense Health Agency and Defense Logistics Agency to make sure we procure safe, high-quality pharmaceuticals. While I cannot speak for other Federal agencies, I will advocate for right shoring our supply chains to improve the resilience of the American pharmaceutical industrial base.

7. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Bass, do you commit to working with my office to address dangerous drug shortages impacting the health and readiness of our warfighters?

Mr. BASS. Yes. As a prior Navy Sailor and officer, I understand firsthand how critical drug shortages introduce risk to achieving the mission.

#### REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

8. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Bass, following the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision, 19 states have banned or severely restricted access to abortion and related reproductive services. These restrictions create challenges for servicemembers stationed in those States, impacting their health and safety. This Administration also rescinded the DOD reproductive health travel policy, taking away critical support for our servicemembers' reproductive choice. What actions will you take to ensure that all servicemembers, regardless of duty station, have access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion, contraception, and related counseling services?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I will ensure that DOD continues to provide medically necessary reproductive health care, consistent with applicable law.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

#### ETHICS

9. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

10. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed, will you commit to not engaging in any lobbying activities, including unregistered "shadow" or "behind-the-scenes" lobbying under the guise of consulting or advising on DOD-related matters, focused on DOD or any of its components for 4 years after leaving DOD?

Mr. BASS. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

11. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. No.

12. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. No.

13. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. No.

14. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. No.

15. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. No.

16. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. No.

17. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you own any defense contractor stock, will you divest it to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest?

Mr. BASS. The Ethics Agreement I signed on March 7, 2025, which was previously provided to the Committee, sets forth my ethics commitments, if confirmed.

18. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, will you commit not to retaliate, including by denying access to DOD officials or facilities, against news outlets or individual journalists who publish articles that are critical of you, your office, DOD, or the Trump administration?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

19. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, how many times have you been accused of sexually harassing, assaulting, or creating a hostile work environment for another individual in a personal or professional capacity? Provide a list of all instances in which you have been accused of sexually harassing, assaulting, or creating a hostile work environment for an individual and the behavior of which you were accused.

Mr. BASS. Never.

20. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, have you requested, or has anyone requested on your behalf, that any other person or third party sign a nondisclosure, confidentiality, non-disparagement, or similar agreement regarding your conduct in a personal or professional capacity?

Mr. BASS. No.

21. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, will you voluntarily release any individual from any such agreements before your nomination hearing?

Mr. BASS. N/A.

22. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, have you ever paid or promised to pay, or has anyone paid or promised to pay on your behalf, an individual as part of any non-disclosure, confidentiality, non-disparagement, or similar agreement?

Mr. BASS. No.

23. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if the answer to the question above was yes, how much was promised, how much was paid, and what were the circumstances?

Mr. BASS. N/A.

24. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, will you commit to recuse yourself from all particular matters involving your former clients and employers for at least 4 years?

Mr. BASS. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are

appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

25. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, will you commit to not seeking employment, board membership with, or another form of compensation from a company that you regulated or otherwise interacted with while in government, for at least 4 years after leaving office?

Mr. BASS. I will abide by the extensive post-government employment ethics rules required by Federal law as well as the terms of my Ethics Agreement. These provisions set forth comprehensive restrictions relating to acceptance of compensation from defense contractors, as well as communicating back to the Federal Government on behalf of any future employers and clients. I believe that these existing rules are appropriate and sufficient to protect the public interest. If confirmed, I will carry out the responsibilities of my office honorably, and I will seek any post-government employment in full compliance with the applicable ethics rules.

26. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, would it ever be appropriate to threaten or imply that you would withhold future contracts from a company if they filed a complaint, bid protest, or cooperated with an Inspector General, civil, or criminal investigation?

Mr. BASS. No.

27. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you think it is valuable to encourage competition and innovation in the defense industrial base?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

28. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, a 2024 Department of Defense Inspector General (DOD OIG) report found that between 2009 and 2018 “all phases of the [White House Medical Unit’s] pharmacy operations had severe and systemic problems due to the unit’s reliance on ineffective internal controls to ensure compliance with pharmacy safety standards.” During your tenure with the White House Medical Unit (WHMU), did you have knowledge of WHMU staff dispensing controlled substances to ineligible staffers?

During my tenure with the WHMU, I was not aware of staff dispensing controlled substances to ineligible staffers without the proper approvals. All pharmacy operations were reviewed and monitored in accordance with applicable law and procedures.

29. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if so, how long were you aware of the situation?

Mr. BASS. N/A

30. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if so, what steps, if any, did you take to correct the issue?

Mr. BASS. N/A

31. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if so, did you or staff, under your direction, dispense controlled substances to ineligible staffers?

Mr. BASS. No. I did not direct staff to dispense controlled substances to ineligible staffers. I leave clinical judgments to those with credentials and privileges to do so.

32. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, during your tenure with the WHMU, were you aware of the “severe and systemic problems” happening within the WHMU?

Mr. BASS. No. I believe problems identified by the DOD Office of the Inspector General have since been resolved with new policy.

33. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if so, how long were you aware of the situation?

Mr. BASS. N/A

34. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if so, what steps, if any, did you take to mitigate these problems?

Mr. BASS. N/A

35. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, reporting by the DOD OIG found that the WHMU staff performed tasks in violation of the Code of Regulations, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) policy, and DOD guidance. During your tenure with the WHMU, did you conduct tasks in violation of Federal law, policy, or guidance?

Mr. BASS. No.

36. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, during your tenure with the WHMU, did you direct staff to conduct tasks in violation of Federal law, policy, or guidance?

Mr. BASS. No.

37. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, during your tenure with the WHMU, were you aware of any conduct that violated Federal law, policy, or guidance?

Mr. BASS. No.

38. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, reporting by the DOD OIG also found that the WHMU wasted thousands of dollars on brand name drugs rather than generic equivalents. If confirmed as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD(HA)), what steps will you take to prevent similar waste?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I will ensure compliance with DOD formulary standards. An attending physician can make a request for a brand name pharmaceutical if clinically indicated in accordance with procedures published by the Defense Health Agency. I understand that recent policy clarifies that these procedures apply to the WHMU.

39. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, did any WHMU staff raise concerns with you about improper dispersal of controlled substances?

Mr. BASS. No.

40. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, did you admonish, discipline, threaten, or retaliate against anyone who raised concerns about improper dispersal of controlled substances?

Mr. BASS. No.

41. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, were you at any time contacted by or under investigation or review by the DOD OIG for your role in the "severe and systemic problems" of the WHMU, or for any other reason?

Mr. BASS. No.

42. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, Military.com reported that you were a poor communicator and "offloaded" your responsibilities to others when you were the Director of the Office of Medical Services at the CIA. If confirmed as the ASD(HA), what steps would you take to prevent miscommunication in this new role?

Mr. BASS. The Military.com article is based on factually unsupported assertions and distorted narrative. I would hope that anyone who found something I said to be misleading or inappropriate to come speak directly with me. If confirmed, I will rely on the senior military and civilian staff in the Office of the ASD(HA) to bring forward concerns or alert me to a misgiving without any threat of retaliation or reprisal. A good leader is never threatened by honest feedback.

43. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, your lack of medical training caused friction when you were the Director of the Office of Medical Services at the CIA. If confirmed, what will you do to prevent similar friction and concerns in your new role?

Mr. BASS. The ASD(HA) is the senior health policy advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness as well as the resourcing and programming authority for the Military Health System. If confirmed, I will adhere to those roles and make sure the many physicians, surgeons, nurses, and scientists across the Military Health System provide their expertise and insights into policymaking whenever and wherever necessary. congressional Oversight and Transparency

44. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what is your understanding of the role of the Department of Defense Inspector General and service Inspectors General?

Mr. BASS. It is my understanding that the role of the Department of Defense Inspector General is to conduct independent audits and investigations relating to DOD's programs and operations to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness and to prevent and detect fraud and abuse. It is my understanding that the Service Inspectors General perform similar functions, independently assessing for the Secretaries of the Military Departments matters such as economy, efficiency, and readiness.

45. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. Yes.

46. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. If confirmed, I will work to comply with Inspector General requests in a timely manner. I would defer to the Office of the Inspector General to update members of the Committee regarding the progress of the Inspector General's ongoing reviews.

47. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed, will you commit to refusing to follow illegal orders from any individual, including the President?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I will follow the law and the Constitution of the United States.

48. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what actions would you take if you were given an illegal order from any individual, including the President?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I would have a duty not to carry out a manifestly unlawful order.

49. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, will you commit to testify or provide a deposition if you are called upon by Congress to provide a deposition voluntarily?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

50. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, will you commit to testify or provide a deposition to Congress if you are issued a subpoena to testify?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

51. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, will you commit to providing information or documents to Congress voluntarily if you are requested to do so?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

52. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, will you provide information or documents to Congress if you are issued a subpoena?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

53. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. Yes.

54. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if confirmed, will you commit to posting your official calendar monthly?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I will commit to transparency consistent with the law. For example, if my official calendar is requested pursuant to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, I will commit to releasing responsive agency records subject to any withholding under applicable FOIA exemptions.

55. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you think DOD has an overclassification problem? If so, please provide this committee with an estimate of the number or percentage of documents that will be under your purview that are overclassified.

Mr. BASS. No, not in the Military Health System.

56. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, to the best of your knowledge, is your service or component identifying records for proactive posting in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act? If not, please describe how you would ensure that they do so to comply with public records law.

Mr. BASS. Yes.

57. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if confirmed, do you think your department should pursue strategic technology to support automated declassification?

Mr. BASS. Yes, although this is outside my subject matter expertise.

PROJECT 2025

58. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. No.

59. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. No.

#### NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MISSILE DEFENSE

60. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, have you communicated with any foreign government or entity controlled by a foreign government within the past 5 years?

Mr. BASS. Not outside of routine official government business.

61. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. None.

#### RETALIATION AND PROTECTING WHISTLEBLOWERS

62. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. Yes.

63. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, have you ever retaliated against any individual for coming forward about an illegal order, sexual assault or harassment, negligence, misconduct, or any other concern that they wish to raise?

Mr. BASS. No.

64. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed, will you commit to protecting whistleblowers? If so, please specify how you will do so.

Mr. BASS. Yes. I would make it clear retaliation against a whistleblower is not tolerated.

#### IMPOUNDMENT CONTROL ACT

65. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, on January 27, 2025, President Trump's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memo calling for the suspension all Federal financial assistance programs (excluding "assistance provided directly to individuals"). Do you agree with OMB's decision to issue this memo?

Mr. BASS. This question does not impact the Defense Health Program.

66. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you believe the Secretary of Defense has the legal authority to block the disbursement of funds appropriated by Congress?

Mr. BASS. 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.

67. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what is your understanding of the Impoundment Control Act (ICA)?

Mr. BASS. The Impoundment Control Act lays out procedures the President must follow to seek a deferral of execution or rescission of funds appropriated for a specific purpose. Duly appointed officers still have an obligation to prioritize and efficiently resource requirements that are most critical to the mission.

68. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you commit to following the Impoundment Control Act?

Mr. BASS. 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.

69. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. 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 advice the administration's legal positions and from the Department's General Counsel's office.

70. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. 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.

71. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. 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.

72. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, 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. BASS. 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. DOD has an obligation to the men and women in uniform to prioritize limited resources to requirements and warfighting capabilities most critical to national security.

73. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you commit to expending the money that Congress appropriates and authorizes?

Mr. BASS. 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 advice the administration's legal positions and from the Department's General Counsel's office.

74. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you commit to following and implementing every provision of the annual National Defense Authorization Act passed into law?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I commit to following all laws.

#### BLAST OVERPRESSURE

75. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed, will you commit to protecting servicemembers from blast overpressure and increasing their options for seeking care after being exposed?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

76. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed, what steps will you take to protect servicemembers from blast overpressure and increase their options for seeking care after being exposed?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I will continue letting the science inform policy for blast over pressure and ensure that the Military Health System's clinical practice guidelines reflect and incorporate leading, state-of-the-science practices.

77. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, how do you plan to work with the Department of Veterans Affairs to make sure that servicemembers, veterans, and their families are aware of the risks of blast overpressure and traumatic brain injury?

Mr. BASS. DOD has a long history of sharing longitudinal records and clinical practice guidelines with the Department of Veteran Affairs. If confirmed, I will continue to support and strengthen this partnership.

78. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you support establishing logs for troops on blast overpressure exposure and traumatic brain injury?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

79. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you support requiring neurocognitive assessments of troops annually, before they begin training to establish a baseline, and before they leave the military to determine when their change in cognitive health over time?

Mr. BASS. Yes, although I would let the scientists and physicians recommend any changes to periodicity of neurocognitive assessments.

80. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed, how will you address the links between blast overpressure exposure and increased risks of suicide?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I will let the scientists and epidemiologists continue to study and evaluate the correlations between blast overpressure and increase risk of suicide.

81. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what steps would you take to improve suicide prevention efforts, including investing in peer support programs, crisis intervention, and community-based mental health initiatives?

Mr. BASS. I would support the requirements and resourcing processes within the DOD and ensure that these processes prioritize mental health care across the Military Health System for Service members.

82. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, it appears that U.S. Army Green Beret Master Sgt. Matthew Livelsberger, who died by suicide in a cybertruck explosion on January 1, 2025, may have had a history of traumatic brain injury. What do you understand to be the consequences and long-term effects of blast overpressure exposure and brain injury on servicemembers?

Mr. BASS. I understand that the DOD is still investing in research activities to better understand the consequences and long-term effects of blast overpressure on warfighter brain health. I also understand that scientists continue to learn more about these effects and that our brains may not be as resilient as we once thought to blast overpressure.

83. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you support addressing the risks of blast overpressure to servicemembers through the swift implementation of sections 721 through section 725 of the Fiscal Year 2025 NDAA?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

#### RIGHT-TO-REPAIR

84. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you believe giving DOD access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could advance DOD's readiness?

Mr. BASS. Yes. Generally speaking, having access to the technical data necessary to support fielded systems could help reduce repair and sustainment costs.

85. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you believe giving DOD access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could help reduce DOD's repair and sustainment costs?

Mr. BASS. Yes. Generally speaking, having access to the technical data necessary to support fielded systems could help reduce repair and sustainment costs. The Department acquires data and license rights under contract with an associated value, and it would need to determine on a case-by-case basis to determine the cost-benefit ratio.

86. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, how will you ensure servicemembers in your service or component, who are stationed abroad, can timely and cost-effectively repair equipment when needed, especially in a contested logistics environment?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I would work with strategic partners across the DOD, including the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and

Sustainment and the Defense Logistics Agency, to support a readiness posture for contested environments.

87. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed, will you commit to including right-to-repair/technical data rights clauses in acquisition contracts that your service or component enters into?

Mr. BASS. Yes, I would advocate across the Department for allowing user-level repair, where appropriate.

88. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed, will you commit to ensuring contractors deliver technical data rights to your service or component when their contract requires or allows it?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

89. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed, will you commit to conducting an assessment of the cost of not having the right-to-repair/technical data rights for your service's or component's equipment, the results of which you would make public for review by Congress and the Department of Government Efficiency?

Mr. BASS. Yes, although such requirements may be less of a concern in the Military Health System.

#### ACQUISITION REFORM

90. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what is your understanding of the Procurement Integrity Act and your obligations under that law?

Mr. BASS. The Procurement Integrity Act prevents unethical and improper competitive practices from influencing Federal procurements by prohibiting the disclosure or obtaining protected information before a contract award and restricting acceptance of post-government employment compensation from contractors by certain former officials.

91. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass do you believe that it is important to be able to assess accurate cost and pricing data from contractors, especially for sole-or single-source contracts?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I will work with Department stakeholders and the acquisition workforce to ensure the Department has access to accurate cost and pricing data as required by law.

92. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, how do you plan to obtain cost and pricing data from contractors to determine that the cost of DOD contracts is fair and reasonable?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I would rely on procurement subject matter experts.

93. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, how do you plan to do so in cases where contractors refuse or claim they are unable to turn over this data?

Mr. BASS. A contractor must provide this information if required by contract or documented in a request for proposal.

94. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that contractors are not price gouging or overcharging DOD?

Mr. BASS. Most procurement information for the Military Health System is akin to procurement activities in other large health systems in the United States, making comparison easier and pricing fairer.

95. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you are confirmed will you commit to seeking refunds from contractors and companies that overcharge DOD?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I will continue to seek redress in full compliance of what the law will allow.

96. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if so, how do you plan to do so?

Mr. BASS. I would rely on procurement subject matter experts for assistance.

#### RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

97. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, does DOD benefit from partnering with colleges, universities, nonprofits, and federally funded research and development centers?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

98. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, under your leadership, will DOD continue to work with colleges, universities, nonprofits, and federally funded research and development centers to research and address our toughest national security challenges?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I commit to continuing to work with colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, and federally funded research and development centers to develop new and transformative capabilities for the Warfighter consistent with the Administration's mission and priorities.

99. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, on March 20, 2025, DOD announced it was terminating \$360 million in grants. What is your understanding of DOD's criteria for canceling grants?

Mr. BASS. I was not involved in the decisionmaking behind the terminations and so am not in a position to speak on the matter.

100. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what should DOD's criteria for canceling grants be?

Mr. BASS. Grants should be canceled if there are truly higher priority needs for our Service members. In this resource constrained environment, we must ensure mission critical needs are prioritized.

101. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, who should be involved in decisions to cancel DOD grants?

Mr. BASS. Decisions to terminate grant awards may be necessary to ensure that the Department makes the best use of available resources. These decisions are most often made by those responsible for the individual program the grant supports but can also be determined by DOD leadership in accordance with Department priorities or the Administration consistent with its policy objectives.

102. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, does DOD invest enough in research and development?

Mr. BASS. Ensuring the Department remains on the cutting edge means proper funding for research and development (R&D) has to be a priority. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Secretary, the Comptroller and the Undersecretary of Defense for R&D to ensure we are properly investing in research and development.

103. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do defense contractors invest enough in research and development?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the R&D investments made by defense contractors. However, I believe it is critical that we ensure defense contractors have the proper incentives to make sufficient investments in research and development that align with the Department's efforts.

104. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what should DOD's top research and development priorities be?

Mr. BASS. For the Military Health System, we must maintain focus on biomedical research for battlefield medicine and prolonged field care; increase research in understanding the effects of weapons systems on our Service members; as well as the causes, epidemiology, and treatment for conditions that uniquely affect the military.

#### EXCEPTIONAL FAMILIES

105. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, TRICARE's Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) was designed to serve as a military equivalent to Medicaid but military family advocates report it remains too limited in scope and funding to fully meet the needs of exceptional families. Given the uncertainty surrounding Medicaid at the Federal and State levels, do you support expanding ECHO to ensure military families have consistent access to necessary services, no matter where they are stationed?

I support programs within the Military Health System that expand access to our military families no matter where they are stationed, but I do believe we need to ensure that remote health care options are adequately resourced and patient-friendly.

106. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what specific steps would you take to improve ECHO so that it better reflects the comprehensive care and flexibility of Medicaid waiver programs?

I would work with the subject matter experts within the Defense Health Agency to ensure that all additive programs to the TRICARE Health Plan are accessible to

our military families and, perhaps more importantly, that the care provided by the DOD is accessible at home, aboard, and wherever our family members live.

107. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, how would you advocate for increased funding and program improvements to reduce out-of-pocket costs and administrative burdens for military families who rely on ECHO?

On behalf of our military families, I would advocate broadly for all of the requirements of the Military Health System and ensure that the Secretary of Defense and Congress understand the tradeoffs we have to make as good stewards of the taxpayers dollars.

108. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, proposed changes to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funding and school-based therapies threaten to reduce access to critical services, forcing parents to fight for accommodations their children are legally entitled to receive. For military families who move frequently, these challenges are even greater, as they must re-establish services with each relocation, often facing delays and inconsistencies in school-provided support. Compounding this issue is the misconception that TRICARE-covered medically necessary services, such as speech, occupational, or physical therapy, and applied behavior analysis can replace school-provided services, when in reality, they are separate and distinct. TRICARE services are designed to meet medical needs, while schools are required to provide educational support services—not substitute one for the other. Given these concerns, how would you work to protect and strengthen medically necessary services delivered by a medical provider within the school setting, ensuring that children with exceptional needs receive the full range of support they require?

The DOD Exceptional Family Member Program is a mandatory enrollment program designed to provide comprehensive and coordinated support and services to our military families with special medical or educational needs. I will continue supporting this program and ensure that the requirements for enrollment are aligned with leading practices to help our military families thrive.

#### MENTAL HEALTH

109. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do you support strengthening military and veteran mental health services to ensure that those in crisis can access care without unnecessary obstacles?

Yes.

110. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what specific measures would you take to ensure DOD fully complies with mental health parity rules, reducing bureaucratic barriers that prevent servicemembers and their families from receiving necessary treatment?

I would ensure that all instructions maximize access to mental health care without bureaucratic barriers. I would work toward ensuring that requirements for mental health care are resourced appropriately to deliver the capability needed.

111. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, how would you advocate for expanded mental health provider networks within TRICARE, ensuring military communities have access to quality care no matter where they are stationed?

I understand that DOD now has the authority for TRICARE network providers to deliver mental health care across State lines, which greatly expands opportunities to access care. If confirmed, I would continue implementing these authorities while also expanding and refining tele-health services for mental health care.

#### PROTECTING CLASSIFIED INFORMATION AND FEDERAL RECORDS

112. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what is your understanding of the need to protect operational security, or OPSEC?

Mr. BASS. All information that could be used by an adversary to hurt the military or reduce national security must be protected in accordance with the instructions from the classifying authority.

113. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what are the national security risks of improperly disclosing classified information?

Mr. BASS. It is generally accepted that the improper or unauthorized disclosure of classified information could be expected to cause identifiable or describable damage to national security. The describable damage and certainty of that damage would depend on the details of the information released, including the level of classification, as well as the extent and nature of the disclosure. Determining the extent

of damage to national security is part of the unauthorized disclosure process as outlined in DOD policy, and I would defer to the Department for additional specifics.

114. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, is it your opinion that information about imminent military targets is generally sensitive information that needs to be protected?

Mr. BASS. The Department has robust policies and processes dedicated to determining the sensitivity of information related to military targets. If confirmed, I will ensure that myself and those under my organizational control will adhere to those processes and standards.

115. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what would you do if you learned an official had improperly disclosed classified information?

Mr. BASS. I would report it to the DOD security managers for immediate assessment and mitigation.

116. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, what is your understanding of Government officials' duties under the Federal Records Act?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I will adhere to the Federal Records Act and the applicable DOD policies that implement it, which ensure that the Federal records I create or receive are appropriately maintained.

117. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, should classified information be shared on unclassified commercial systems?

Mr. BASS. As per the DOD's Information Security Program, only computers and IT systems approved and accredited for Classified National Security Information may be used for classified communications.

118. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, is it damaging to national security if the pilots flying a mission find out that the official who ordered them to perform that mission shared sensitive information that could have made it more likely that the mission would fail or they would be killed?

Mr. BASS. The Department of Defense places the utmost importance on mission success and the safety of the men and women carrying out the mission, making it the finest fighting force in the world. If confirmed, I will endeavor to carry on that tradition of excellence supporting the men and women of the armed forces in my role as the ASD(HA).

119. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if you had information about the status of specific targets, weapons being used, and timing for imminent U.S. strikes against an adversary, under what circumstances would you feel comfortable receiving or sharing that information on an unclassified commercial application like Signal?

Mr. BASS. If confirmed, I commit to adhering to the information security policies of the Department of Defense.

#### TREATING CIVILIANS AT MEDICAL TREATMENT FACILITIES

120. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, do trauma centers and other military treatment facilities (MTF) benefit from being able to treat civilians?

Mr. BASS. If the care delivered is complex and relevant to combat operations, then yes, treating non-beneficiary civilians at MTFs benefits the readiness posture of the DOD.

121. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if confirmed, will you review DOD's processes for waiving fees for civilians to ensure that problems with MTF billing do not load civilians up with medical debt?

Mr. BASS. Yes.

#### MEDICAL CAPACITY

122. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, in your judgment, is the U.S. military's medical system prepared to support large-scale combat operations?

Mr. BASS. In my judgment the Military Health System is not best positioned and prepared to support large-scale combat operations today.

123. Senator WARREN. Mr. Bass, if the U.S. military's medical system is not prepared to support large-scale combat operations, what steps should DOD take to be adequately prepared?

Mr. BASS. I believe the Military Health System needs to close gaps in requirements first and foremost at the military medical centers and hospitals most critical to combat operations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
[The nomination reference of Mr. Keith M. Bass follows:]

**NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT**

**PN12-1**

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:

Keith Bass, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Lester Martinez-Lopez.

\_\_\_\_\_, 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. Keith M. Bass, which was transmitted to the Committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

**Biography**  
**Keith M. Bass**

**Education:**

- Arkansas Tech University, Russellville, Arkansas  
Dates Attended: August 1993-July1995  
Degree Awarded: Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (BA)
- Arkansas Tech University, Russellville, Arkansas  
Dates Attended: August 1993-July1995  
Degree Awarded: Bachelor of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling (BS)
- University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas  
Dates Attended: August 1995-May1997  
Degree Awarded: Master of Science, Counseling (MS)
- Navy Health Collegiate Scholarship Program (HCSP)  
Texas Woman's University, Dallas, Texas  
Dates Attended: August 1998-July 2000  
Degree Awarded: Master of Healthcare Administration MHA/MBA

**Employment Record:**

- West Texas VA Health Care System  
Big Spring, Texas 79720  
Medical Center Director  
June 2023-Present
- GlobalMed  
Vienna, Virginia 22182  
Senior Vice President (SVP), Business and Clinical Development  
March 2022-June 2023
- Central Intelligence Agency  
McLean, Virginia 22101  
Director, Office of Medical Services  
September 2019-March 2022
- White House Medical Unit  
Washington, DC  
Director (Civilian GS-15)  
March 2019-September 2019

- White House Medical Unit  
Washington, DC  
Director (Military/ CDR, USN)  
May 2013-March 2019
- Central Intelligence Agency  
McLean, Virginia 22101  
Chief, Medical Operations (LCDR/USN)  
Associate Director Military Affairs Division  
September April 2011-May 2013

**Honors and Awards:**

- Military Awards:
  - Presidential Service Badge
  - Defense Meritorious Service Medal (x3)
  - Joint Service Commendation Medal
  - Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medal (x4)
  - Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal (x2)
  - Joint Meritorious Unit Award (x2)
  - National Defense Service Medal
  - Global War on Terrorism Medal
  - Humanitarian Service Medal
  - Overseas Service Medal
- Federal Civilian Awards:
  - Central Intelligence Agency, The Director's Award, 2021 – Gina Haspel
  - Central Intelligence Agency, The Director's Award, 2013 – John Brennan
  - Junior Healthcare Executive of the Year; Regents Award; American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE)

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[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. Keith M. Bass in connection with his nomination follows:]

119<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, 2025 -- 2026  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
ROOM SR-228  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-6050  
(202) 224-3871

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES QUESTIONNAIRE  
INFORMATION REQUESTED OF CIVILIAN NOMINEES

**INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE:** Answer all questions and provide all requested information. If more space is needed, attach an additional sheet of paper to the Questionnaire and cite the part of the Questionnaire and the question number (e.g., A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies. Unless otherwise required, an answer of “yes”, “no”, or “not applicable” is appropriate.

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART A

**NOTE:** Information furnished in this part of the Questionnaire will be made available in Committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearing, if any, and will be entered in the hearing record, also available to the public.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC

1. Name (Include any former names you have used): Keith M. Bass
2. Position to which nominated: Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD/HA)
3. Date of nomination: December 22, 2024
4. Education (List names of secondary and higher education institution attended, type of school [vocational, technical, trade school, college, university, military college, correspondence, distance, extension, and on-line], dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted):  
  
- Arkansas Tech University, Russellville, Arkansas; August 1993-July 1995  
Bachelor of Arts, Psychology (BA) – Awarded: July 1995

- Arkansas Tech University, Russellville, Arkansas; August 1993-July 1995  
Bachelor of Science, Rehabilitation Counseling (BS) – Awarded: July 1995
- University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas; August 1995-May 1997  
Master of Science, Counseling (MS) – Awarded: May 1997
- Navy Health Collegiate Scholarship Program (HCSP)  
Texas Woman's University, Dallas, Texas; August 1998-July 2000  
Master of Healthcare Administration MHA/MBA – Awarded: July 2000

5. Employment record (List all jobs held since college, or in the last 10 years, whichever is less, including the title or description of the job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment. If the employment activity was military duty, show each change of military duty station as a separate period of employment):

Employer: West Texas VA Health Care System  
Title: Medical Center Director  
Location: Big Spring, Texas 79720  
Dates: June 2023-Present

Employer: GlobalMed  
Title: Senior Vice President (SVP), Business and Clinical Development  
Location: Vienna, Virginia 22182  
Dates: March 2022-June 2023

Employer: Central Intelligence Agency  
Title: Director, Office of Medical Services  
Location: McLean, Virginia 22101  
Dates: September 2019-March 2022

Employer: White House Medical Unit  
Title: Director (Civilian GS-15)  
Location: Washington, DC 20502  
Dates: March 2019-September 2019

Employer: White House Medical Unit  
Title: Director (Military/ CDR, USN)  
Location: Washington, DC 20502  
Dates: May 2013-March 2019

Employer: Central Intelligence Agency  
Title: Chief, Medical Operations (LCDR/USN)  
Associate Director Military Affairs Division

Location: McLean, Virginia 22101  
Dates: September April 2011-May 2013

6. Have you ever received approval, pursuant to section 908 of title 37, United States Code, to accept civil employment (and compensation for that employment), payment for speeches, travel, meals, lodging, registration fees, or a non-cash award from a foreign government? No.
7. Government experience (List any advisory, consultative, honorary, and other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed in response to question 5, above): None.
8. Business relationships (List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, and of any educational or other institution): None.
9. Memberships (List all memberships and offices that you currently hold, as well as any memberships and offices you have previously held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable and other organizations): None.
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): N/A.
  - b. List all memberships and offices held in, and services rendered to, all political parties or election committees during the last 5 years: N/A.
  - c. Itemize all individual political contributions of \$100 or more to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity during the past 5 years. List each individual contribution (not the total amount contributed to the person or entity) over this period: None.
11. Honors and awards (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition received for outstanding service or achievements):

Presidential Service Badge  
Defense Meritorious Service Medal (x3)  
Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medal (x4)  
Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal (x2)  
Joint Meritorious Unit Award (x2)  
National Defense Service Medal  
Global War on Terrorism Medal  
Humanitarian Service Medal  
Overseas Service Medal  
Central Intelligence Agency, The Director's Award, 2021 – Gina Haspel  
Central Intelligence Agency, The Director's Award, 2013 – John Brennan  
Junior Healthcare Executive of the Year; American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE)

12. Published writings (List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, or other published materials that you have written or for which you served as co-author or editor, including articles and blogs published on the internet): None.
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). None.

**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? Yes.
15. Do you agree, if confirmed, to provide this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents

and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so timely? Yes.

16. Do you agree, if confirmed, to consult with this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Yes.
17. Do you agree, if confirmed, to keep this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Yes.
18. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this Committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Yes.
19. Do you agree, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this Committee? Yes.
20. Do you agree, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Yes.

#### FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS

21. If you are confirmed by the Senate, will you sever all business connections with your present employers, business firms, business associations, and business organizations? Yes.
22. Do you have any plans, commitments or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government? If so, explain. No.

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[The nominee responded to Parts B-F of the Committee questionnaire. The text of the questionnaire is set forth in the Appendix to this volume. The nominee's answers to Parts B-F are contained in the Committee's executive files.]

**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 "Keith M. Bass", is written over a solid horizontal line.

**This 27th day of January 2025**

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[The nomination of Mr. Keith M. Bass was reported to the Senate by Chairman Wicker on April 8, 2025, with the recommendation that the nomination be confirmed. The nomination was confirmed by the Senate on January 5, 2026.]

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