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TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF LIEUTENANT
GENERAL JOHN D. CAINE, USAF (RETIRED)
TO BE GENERAL AND CHAIRMAN OF THE
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

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TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL JOHN D. CAINE, USAF (RETIRED) TO BE GENERAL AND CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2025

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:35 a.m. in room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Roger Wicker (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

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

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROGER F. WICKER

Chairman WICKER. The Committee will come to order. Our eager Members of the fourth estate are welcome to clear away, thanking them for their presence. This morning, the Committee meets to consider the nomination of retired Lieutenant General Dan Caine for the position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

General Caine has a tremendous responsibility before him. I believe President Trump has made an excellent choice in selecting him to meet the challenges. So I thank General Caine for his willingness to serve our country, especially in this hour of need. We live in the most dangerous national security moment since World War II. An axis of aggressors led by the Chinese Communist Party, and Vladimir Putin's Russia means us harm. This axis does not want this century to be an American-led century or a freedom led century.

Our adversaries have started two wars against Ukraine and Israel. They threaten to open a third front against Taiwan. We must restore peace and we could do that only through strength. Since his nomination was announced, some people have written that General Caine is unqualified. They point out that he has not served as a combatant commander, as a service chief or as a vice-chairman, roles which are contemplated in 10 USC 152.

I would suggest these same people read or reread the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. Those who read that law and then read General Caine's resume will see that the architects of that legislation would conclude that their reforms were successful. The driving

force behind Goldwater-Nichols was to inspire, and in some cases, require jointness. So, let's talk about jointness with regard to Lieutenant General Caine.

They believed that when our military services work together, those services are greater than the sum of their parts. General Caine agrees and his record reflects that. He began his career as an Air Force fighter pilot in 1992. By the time he was done, General Caine had operated in every domain, and he had developed relationships with every service. That would not have been true 40 years ago.

General Caine flew and committed aircraft, but he's also worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, having helped in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, in the midst of a bird flu outbreak. At the White House, General Caine wrote early homeland security strategies. He deployed and commanded repeatedly to Iraq and Syria, serving within various special operations forces units. He ran our most secretive programs for all military services. General Caine worked extensively as the CIA's [Central Intelligence Agency] senior military officer, again, collaborating with every military service and combatant command.

It's difficult to imagine a better joint and interagency background for a nominee of this position. Our threat environment is complex, and General Caine understands how the services can work together to meet today's dangers. We have much work to do as this committee knows. We need to grow our defense budget. We need to reform the Pentagon's processes drastically. If confirmed, General Caine would play a significant role in providing military advice to the Secretary of Defense and the President of the United States on both of those topics.

In particular, the chairman plays a significant role in the requirements process. I hope he will make a priority to modernize this critical aspect. The statutory role of the chairman may be limited, but the position is explicitly the voice of the combatant commanders. That voice matters because the commanders are largely absent from our requirements and budgeting processes. The chairman can and should also be an advocate for a more agile planning process, one that considers the problems—and I'm going to use two big words here, the problems of simultaneity and protracted warfare. I guess that's three big terms, three big words, and two big terms.

These are technical terms for fairly straightforward facts. First, that our adversaries are likely to act against us in a coordinated fashion; simultaneity. Second, that once that war breaks out, it tends to take on a life of its own; protracted warfare.

Last, a chairman is responsible to deliver a serious, honest chairman's risk assessment to this Committee as soon as possible. I look forward to General Caine's thoughts on each of these points. Based on my conversations with the nominee and based on his actions in uniform, I'm confident that General Caine will give President Trump his best military advice.

He will do so without bias as he's required to do. He would not consider whether the President may like or dislike that advice. That's exactly what a United States President deserves. I'm convinced that General Caine sees this role as absolutely nonpartisan.

We can argue politics up here on this dais, but I expect General Caine to stay out of it no matter the subject.

I thank the nominee for his service and for appearing today, and I turn now to my friend and colleague, Ranking Member Reed for his opening remarks.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Lieutenant General Caine, welcome and congratulations on your nomination.

Also, I would like to extend my appreciation to your family because I know they've been with you throughout your entire career and they're with you today. I also want to offer my deepest condolences to the families of the United States Army soldiers who tragically lost their lives in Lithuania during a mission last week.

General Caine, you have been nominated to be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I'm going to start by acknowledging the unusual conditions around your nomination. Six weeks ago, President Trump abruptly dismissed General CQ Brown, who was not even halfway into his tenure as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Secretary of Defense Hegseth, also dismissed several other senior officers, including Admiral Lisa Franchetti, the Chief of Naval Operations, General James Slife, the Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, and all three Judge Advocate Generals (JAGs) for the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

To this day, no explanation has been given for the dismissal of these officers. As such, I remain deeply concerned that they were dismissed for political reasons, which sends a chilling message throughout the ranks. I would take a moment to salute General CQ Brown, who served this Nation honorably for more than four decades and led the joint chiefs with dedication and skill. He and each of the officers who were dismissed had outstanding careers in the military and represented our Nation with great courage, honor, and distinction. We all owe them a debt of gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

General Caine, I trust that you understand the fraught situation within which you have been nominated to be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. In this regard, your distinguished record of service is encouraging. As an F16 pilot with thousands of flight hours and multiple combat deployments, you have served with distinction in the Air Force and the Air National Guard. You have also served in senior leadership roles at the Pentagon, the White House, and overseas, including in the special operations and intelligence communities.

General, if confirmed, you will serve as the principal military advisor to the President, the National Security Council, the Secretary of Defense and Congress. You'll be expected to be an effective strategist, advisor, and manager, and your counsel will be relied upon as we confront the multitude of national security issues before us. Indeed, we face significant challenges.

China clearly remains our primary competitor as the only nation with both the intent and capability to challenge the interest of the United States and our allies and partners. At the same time, Russia remains a violent destabilizing force, and nations like Iran and

North Korea continue to push the boundaries of military brinkmanship.

To succeed in this environment, the United States Military must better develop its joint capabilities across all domains, including space, cyber, and information. Moreover, we must not lose the combined strength of our allies, nor can we abandon the soft power of our diplomatic and humanitarian efforts. To retreat to Fortress America will encourage our adversaries to exert their influence throughout the world.

General Caine, I'm interested to know how you would ensure our military remains the world's premier fighting force. If confirmed, you'll be responsible for identifying new joint capabilities and performing net assessments to ensure each of the services are procuring the right capabilities needed for the joint force. The chairman must review capabilities holistically across the total force, which can conflict with the priorities of individual services. The committee would be interested to learn how you plan to manage this dynamic.

In addition, the National Defense Strategy (NDS), the National Military Strategy, and the annual chairman's risk assessment of vital documents, this Committee relies upon to perform its oversight functions. As the Administration begins its work to review and revise these documents, General Caine, I would like your assessment of the current strategy and whether you would recommend any changes to these documents.

Finally, the joint force is fundamentally about people. As the Nation's senior most military officer, it will be your responsibility to understand the needs of America's servicemembers and to be their greatest advocate. If confirmed, you'll be the most visible military officer in the Nation. It'll be critical for you to represent the force with total professionalism and trustworthiness.

Frankly, I'm concerned about the health of civilian military relations in our country. Over the past several months, the military has been dragged into dangerous political fights, public trust in the military is eroding, and I fear that the military's trust in civilian leadership has been shaken. Civilian control of the military is a sacred duty that must be carried out responsibly and not exploited. General, I'd like to know how you work to help improve civil military relations and demonstrate this ethos yourself every day.

Above all else, I expect you to pledge to always provide your best military advice to the President and the Secretary of Defense, even if that advice is not what they want to hear. The safety of our servicemembers and the American people depends upon such candor. General Caine, if confirmed, you will lead the joint force at a momentous time. I thank you and I look forward to your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Reed. General Caine, we will now hear your testimony. You're recognized.

STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL JOHN D. CAINE, RETIRED, NOMINEE FOR APPOINTMENT TO GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO THE POSITION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, thank you, Senator Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, Members of this Committee. My name is Dan Caine and I am honored and humbled to sit before you today as the President's nominee to be the 22d chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

I'd like to start by thanking the President and the Secretary for their trust and confidence in me and if confirmed, allowing me to again, serve our great Nation. I'd also like to thank General CQ Brown and his wife Shereen and their family for their more than 40 years of selfless service to our Nation. I'd like to thank the team that helped prepare me for this hearing today.

Finally, I'd like to thank my family and friends who have given me so much. It is my family who has made my service possible always at their own expense. They have given more than I have and there are not words to express my thanks to each of them, especially my family in our Nation's Midwest.

I sit here before you the proud son of an Air Force fighter pilot who flew F4 Phantoms in Vietnam. My mom was a pediatric critical care nurse who worked nights so she could be home when my sister and I got up in the morning and when we got home in the afternoon. I learned about service from my parents and the other members of my family who served, not because it was easy, but because it was the right thing to do.

In our family, we serve. When asked, we always say yes. Senators, I acknowledge that I'm an unconventional nominee. These are unconventional times. It is 9:48 p.m. in Beijing, 6:48 p.m. in Tehran, 4:48 p.m. in Moscow, and 10:48 p.m. in Pyongyang. As we sit here now, our Nation faces an unprecedented rising global risk. Our adversaries are advancing, global nuclear threats are on the rise and deterrence is paramount. Our national defense requires urgent action and reform across the board. We must go faster. We must move with a sense of urgency.

We can never forget that our No. 1 job is to create peace through overwhelming strength and if need be, fight and win our Nation's wars. I realize for many Americans I'm an unknown leader, and it is with a heart full of gratitude that I've been given a truly unique set of experiences that I believe have prepared me to be the 22d chairman.

For the past 34 years, I've served in the Active Title 10 Force, in the Title 32 National Guard Force, in the Title 50 Force at the CIA. I've served in the interagency and at the White House, and I've deployed in combat as a fighter pilot, a special operations officer, and a CIA officer, and I've been an entrepreneur and investor in the business sector while a citizen soldier in the National Guard.

As a general officer, I've had the privilege of serving three Presidents from both political parties and most recently was the associate director for military affairs at the CIA. A job where I was charged to provide military advice to the director of the CIA and globally integrate DOD and CIA activities across the world.

Along the way, I've proudly served alongside some of America's most incredible warriors and civilian teammates and their families. I've witnessed them do awe-inspiring things in the service of our Nation and to a person they've poured more into me than I could ever have poured into them. Especially our non-commissioned officer corps. Sadly, I've been there with them as they made the ultimate sacrifice on the fields of battle and been with their families as we told them of their loved one service and sacrifice. I think of our fallen every single day.

These experiences help me to better understand how our Nation considers and uses military force to achieve our national security objectives. They directly inform my views of the importance of carefully considering the use of that force and the risks associated with it beforehand, and always asking the important question, and then what, before we do, and if the decision is made to use military force crushing our enemies and winning.

I've also had the privilege of serving alongside incredible business leaders, starting and scaling companies as an entrepreneur. Along the way I learned what a different kind of grit looks like. Our American entrepreneurial spirit is a force multiplier, and my time as an entrepreneur has made me a better general officer and leader, and if confirmed, I'll bring more of that spirit into the joint force.

Senators I'm here today to earn your trust and the trust of the American people. If confirmed, I'll continue to work as I have for my entire 34 years in uniform, always focused on the mission and our incredible people. If confirmed, I'll continue the traditions and standards of my oath of office and my commissioned as a non-partisan leader who will always strive to do the right thing.

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and Members of the Committee, thank you for your time and your consideration. As we gather here today, let us never forget our deployed forces and their families, and may we always remember our fallen and their families, especially those three that Senator Reed mentioned and our one missing. I look forward to your questions.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very, very much General Caine. I am required to ask you some standard questions that we ask of all nominees in your situation. If you'll just answer yes or no to these questions, keep your talk button pressed. Have you adhered to the applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, Senator, I have.

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

Lieutenant General CAINE. No. Senator, I have not.

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

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, Senator.

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

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, Senator.

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

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, Senator.

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

Lieutenant General CAINE. I will, Senator.

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

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes Senator, I will.

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

Lieutenant General CAINE. They will, Senator.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very, very much. Now let me just start out by asking about some hyperbole that may have been out there in the press. General Caine, did you wear a MAGA [Make America Great Again] hat in front of the President?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Did you wear a MAGA hat at any time?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Would you like to elaborate on that answer?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Sir, for 34 years, I've upheld my oath of office and my commitment to my commission and I have never worn any political merchandise.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you for that answer. Now previous chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of staff have somewhat equivocated when asked about top line spending issues. I think you know about the proposals that will soon be before this Senate and this Congress.

Is it in your best military advice based on your experience, is it your opinion that we need real growth in the defense budget to maintain deterrence against the very capital cities and interests that you mentioned in your testimony?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, thank you for that question. We definitely must have a sense of urgency related to the budget. I think it comes down to ultimately finding more deployable or allocatable capital, and there's really three ways to do that. We can find greater efficiencies in the budget through cost savings. We can reprogram from different programs, or we can get a higher top line, I think of it in terms of a business model where we get more revenue. So we have to move quickly and figure out how we can get real purchasing growth over time.

Chairman WICKER. Well, let's talk about efficiency. In the special operations community and with the CIA, you've worked with some of the most innovative and risk-taking parts of national security enterprise. You also mentioned your experience in the private sec-

tor, which I think can serve you well. Startup ventures in the private sector. Is that right, General Caine?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Chairman WICKER. If confirmed, you will conduct oversight on the military's requirement processes. We hear constantly from our combatant commanders that it takes years for their military needs to be converted into requirements. Based on your experience, do you believe the requirements process needs to be fixed, and do you agree with those who say it needs to be entirely torn down and rebuilt to get our war fighters what they need according to a timeline in which they need it?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I definitely agree something has to be done. The solution is probably somewhere in the middle. I don't know that we need to tear the whole thing down. I definitely agree that we need to improve the speed and agility of our requirements process. Technology is evolving so fast, our requirements process does not evolve at the same time, and we have to have our combatant commander's voice in the requirements process.

The one area that I think we also need to do is to keep a global picture on those requirement processes. No two combatant commands have the same requirements, and only the joint staff has the global view on those requirements along with OSD [Office of The Secretary of Defense]. So, if confirmed, I'd like to continue to work with you and the rest of the Congress to sort through this, so I appreciate it.

Chairman WICKER. Will have you had a chance to read my white paper on the FoRGED Act and that proposed legislation?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Don't you agree that it's a masterful piece of legislation?

[Laughter.]

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, sir. It was a beautiful read, sir. Yes.

Chairman WICKER. Would you like to elaborate on that?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes. Well, sir, I mean, I think it certainly lays out a lot of good markers for improvement in the requirements process.

Chairman WICKER. Well, it seems to me you've worked in the private sector and you work with startups. The number of people in DOD who have to touch something, touch an idea sign off on an idea to actually get something done, is far different from those people who are actually making innovative changes in the private sector. Is that correct?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Do you agree then that we need to move in the direction of efficiency and that a lot of the top line money that I mentioned in my second question can be found by efficiencies and moving things faster, and also we could get to the war fighter what they need in a timely manner?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Well, let me ask—I've got 12 seconds. I might do a followup at the end there, but thank you very much for your testimony. Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. General Caine, as you're aware, it was recently revealed that Senior Trump administration officials, including the Secretary of Defense, were sharing sensitive information about upcoming strikes in Yemen on a Signal group chat.

In your professional opinion, should a member of the joint chiefs or the relevant combatant commander been included in that discussion?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, thanks for that question. I understand that the voice of the joint force had been expressed through the incredible work of the acting chairman and current vice chairman. I understand he put a statement out yesterday or the day before saying that they'd consulted with the secretary. From what I understand of that chat, that was a partisan political chat, and so the joint force should not have been represented in there, sir.

Senator REED. In your professional opinion, should the Yemen strengths have been discussed in a Signal group chat on an unclassified platform?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I understand that both you and the Chairman have asked for an inquiry into that. So I don't want to comment specifically on that matter. What I will say is that we should always preserve the element of surprise, and that should translate across every information domain and format and never put our war fighters in any harm's way.

Senator REED. Well, let me ask you, if you were on that conversation, would you have objected to the fact that it was being conducted on Signal?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I was not in that chat. I would—

Senator REED. I know that, that's why I asked, if you were.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I've always communicated proper information in the proper channels.

Senator REED. Thank you, sir. Immediately following the announcement—and this is a followup to Chairman Wicker's, first question. Immediately following the announcement of your nomination press stories started to circulate about comments President Trump made about you in your past relationship. According to the reports, the President tells a story where he spoke to you while you were serving in Iraq on Active Duty, and you said that you loved him and, "I'll kill for you, sir."

The President then said that you followed up these comments by putting on a Make America Great Again hat. General Caine, is any of this true?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, as I mentioned to the Chairman, for 34 years, I've upheld my oath of office and the responsibilities of my commission. I think I went back and listened to those tapes and I think the President was actually talking about somebody else, and I've never worn any political merchandise or said anything to that effect.

Senator REED. Thank you. General Caine, during the consideration of your nomination, were you ever asked who you voted for in the last election or 2020 election?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I was not.

Senator REED. Are you aware of any presently serving servicemembers or senior civilians in DOD being asked questions like this?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I'm not, Senator.

Senator REED. Do you agree that it's the utmost importance to keep the military apolitical and questions like this should not be asked?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I agree with you. Yes, Senator.

Senator REED. What steps will you'll take to guard against potential politicization?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I think the question was what steps will I take to guard against politicalization. I think it starts with being a good example from the top and making sure that we are nonpartisan and apolitical and speaking the truth to power every day.

Senator REED. General Caine, do you believe there's any situation where it would be appropriate for you not to be consulted prior to a military operation?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I'm not in the job yet, so I can't imagine any hypothetical situation where I would not be in the conversation, if that's what you're asking. You know, I believe the joint force, if confirmed, and even if I'm not in the job, the joint force has a responsibility to provide best options to the Secretary, the NSC [National Security Council], and the President. So I can't imagine a case where the joint force would not be in the conversation.

Senator REED. Final question. If confirmed—and you've got 40 seconds and this probably will take longer than that. So just brief thoughts. How are you going to ensure that the parochialism, which is endemic in every organization, but certainly also in the Department of Defense (DOD) is curtailed or focused to a more joint effort?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I appreciate that and I'll be quick and come back to you with more if need be, but you know, I'm encouraged by the 648 years of experience that currently exist in the Joint Chiefs of Staff and in the joint staff, and I think they're all absolute professionals.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, sir.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Reed. Senator Fisher.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you Mr. Chairman. Welcome General. Thank you for putting yourself forward to continue to serve your country. As you are aware, there's ongoing efforts to force the Department of Defense to vacate portions of key bands of the electromagnetic spectrum, particularly the lower three gigahertz and the seven to eight gigahertz bands.

General Caine, do you agree that the Department of Defense should have a meaningful co-leadership in any inter-agency determinations about the future use of Federal spectrum?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, thanks for that question. You know, there are certain elements of the spectrum that have unique physics associated with them that can impact our combat capabilities. So we certainly want to have a voice in the conversation.

Senator FISCHER. Do you believe that it should be a co-leadership, though, not just a seat at the table, but because of the exquisite assets that the Department has and your knowledge of what those are that you would need to have that co-leadership position?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, you asked what the views of the Department was. Mindful that I'm not in the job yet, and if confirmed, I'd have that conversation with the Secretary about co-leadership related to that.

Senator FISCHER. What are the risks to national security if the Department is forced to vacate those spectrum bands?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator some of that may be reserved for a conversation in closed session at some point in the future, but certainly if we lose portions of that spectrum, we'll lose some exclusivity related to our combat capability. Certainly one, don't want to tip that off to our adversaries who might be listening, but two, would rather talk about that in closed session.

Senator FISCHER. I look forward to having those discussions with you if you are confirmed, sir. General Caine, for the first time in history of the United States faces two nuclear peer adversaries in China and in Russia. Yet our planned nuclear force was decided back in 2010 when the threat environment looked very, very different and it hasn't been reconsidered since then.

For example, just over the past few years, China surpassed the United States in the number of ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile] launchers it possesses. Russia has suspended the New START treaty and nuclear saber rattling has been a defining feature of its invasion to Ukraine. North Korea has claimed to test the first solid fuel ICBM. I'm concerned that our current programs or record may not be sufficient to address these future threats or these current threats, let alone future threats.

So if confirmed, how would you work with the Secretary, the services, STRATCOM, to identify and address any insufficiencies so that our nuclear deterrent would remain credible?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator and it must remain credible. We must invest in the deterrent side of our nuclear triad, and there's a lot of work to be done there. If confirmed, you know, I look to work with the incredible leadership at STRATCOM. We have a great commander out there who's very smart, dedicated, and technically all over the program out there. This will be an area of significant emphasis to make sure that we're fielding the capabilities that we need.

Senator FISCHER. Have you had an opportunity to review the Strategic Posture Commission's 2023 report?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I've not.

Senator FISCHER. I would highly recommend that you do so. It very clearly articulates projected threats. It identifies potential gaps in our capabilities, and it makes a number of actionable recommendations, many of which were included in last year's NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act].

Finally, General Caine, the Nuclear Arms Sea Launch Cruise Missile or SLCM-N, is a Navy program of record that has been supported by this Committee on a strong bipartisan basis. I was pleased to see you affirm the importance of SLCM-N in your advanced policy questions.

Can you explain to this Committee the importance of providing the President with additional theater nuclear options such as SLCM-N?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, when we look at the global lay down of nuclear weapons that you alluded to, the United States, having an additional option is a key and essential component to our overall deterrence. That's where SLCM-N fits into the equation.

Senator FISCHER. So it's important that our Commander-in-Chief would have those options?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, I won't get out in front of the President. It may be a decision that he has a different view on, but certainly the Joint Force should offer him that option for his consideration based on the needs of the deterrent capabilities.

Senator FISCHER. It is a program of record?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, ma'am.

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

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

Senator SHAHEEN. General Caine, congratulations on your nomination and thank you for your willingness to continue to serve the country. I appreciated the time we spent in my office talking about this role and the challenges that you will be facing.

One of the things that we discussed was the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) legislation that was signed by President Trump during his first term. It mandates that women should be at the table in conflict resolution and peace negotiations, and at DOD, that's meant having women involved in security cooperation programs that really give us, I think, an advantage our adversaries like China and Russia.

Just for the record, are you familiar with the WPS program, General Caine?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I am Senator, yes.

Senator SHAHEEN. Do you believe that's a DEI [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion] program?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do not.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Can you provide some examples of the operational advantage that from your perspective, this gives us? General Caine: Well, Senator, I can just give you my own personal recollections from being deployed. Before this was precursors of the program, but when we would go out into the field and after concluding an assault, we would have female members who would speak with those women and children who are on the objective, and they would help us to understand the human terrain in a new and novel way.

WPS is I think a program that really help us to understand the full spectrum of challenges that are in front of us.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you for that. One of the combatant commands that has been most effective in using the WPS law has been United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). Can you talk about how this contributes to the mission that INDOPACOM has?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I'm not familiar with the INDOPACOM specific example. If confirmed, I'll look into it and come back to you with my thoughts on that matter.

Senator SHAHEEN. Great, thank you. I appreciate that. We've been hearing some rumors that have suggested that the Administration is considering ending the dual-hat policy under which our commander of European command serves as the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO. The commander of EUCOM has served as the Supreme Allied Commander since Eisenhower, and part of the reason is to ensure that U.S. command and control of nuclear weapons on the continent also prevents nuclear proliferation in Europe.

So I'm not going to ask you to comment on what the policy of this Administration may or may not be since I assume it's not been determined. But can you talk about the importance of U.S. leadership in NATO as a result of this dual-hat arrangement? And how would you approach mil-to-mil obligations with NATO partners?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, allies and partners are a critical component to our ability to protect and defend our values and virtues around the world. NATO is a key component to that. The President's been clear on his views of, of the importance of NATO, as has the Secretary. You know, related to whether or not SACEUR [Supreme Allied Commander, Europe] stays a United States military officer, I'll defer to the President on that.

I think that's a discussion that he currently is ongoing. But, for me in particular, I value our allies and partners and if confirmed, that'll be a significant portion of the job that I have ahead of me.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, and I appreciate that that's a policy decision, but what I'm really asking is what the advantage is for the United States in having the SACEUR be an American.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, as always, anytime we have United States Forces deployed, we generally have wanted them under a United States commander. That was the history behind the establishment of SACEUR and putting the dual-hat EUCOM commander and SACEUR together. I think it is an opportunity for global leadership in particular in Europe, but again, would defer to the President as he considers what the future policy may look like.

Senator SHAHEEN. I know that Senator Reed asked you this question, and it was part of your official questions from Senator Wicker, but when you have situations where your military advice may be different from the direction that the Administration is heading on policy, how do you intend to approach those situations and how would you continue to make sure that the military perspective that you're supposed to represent is actually being presented?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, the same way I have for 34 years, with candor. Candor has gotten me here today, and candor will continue to allow me to do my job moving forward. The President doesn't have to accept the military advice or the Secretary of the NSC, but we owe it to them for us to deliver that military advice.

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

Lieutenant General CAINE. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. Senator Cotton

Senator COTTON. General Caine, congratulations on your nomination and thank you for your 34 years of service. Thank you also

for your service at times in the intelligence community where your reputation is as strong as it is in the Department of Defense.

Let's continue on the theme of Senator Shaheen's question about providing your candid military advice. I think as the chairman and Senator Reed pointed out, a lot of people don't understand the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is not in the chain of command. Is that correct?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Senator COTTON. By law, your role is the principal of military advisor. So if the President makes a decision on this, that, or the other, policy or operation about this, that, or the other country that goes from him to the Secretary of Defense down to some other commander, say the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) commander or the Secretary of the Army or what have you. You're on the side giving advice to everyone, but you're not actually carrying out decisions in the chain of command.

Lieutenant General CAINE. That's correct, sir.

Senator COTTON. I think Congress gave the chairman that role because we wanted someone who was free from those day-to-day demands of operational or managerial duties to provide that candid military advice. As Senator Shaheen said it, it's important that you provide that advice even when you think the principal doesn't want to hear it, the Secretary of Defense, or the NSC, or the President.

But I think you said in your opening statement that you were an unusual or an unconventional nominee, which was it?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I think it was unconventional, sir.

Senator COTTON. Unconventional. I agree with that. I think most people would as well. You don't strike me as the kind of guy who has been angling for this job for 34 years. Is that a fair statement?

Lieutenant General CAINE. That would be a fair statement, Senator.

Senator COTTON. Did you expect to get this job as recently as, I don't know, 3 or 6 months ago?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I did not, Senator.

Senator COTTON. So is there any reason to think that you're not going to be providing your candid and best professional military advice even, and maybe especially, when you've gotten wind, say a little birdie has tipped you off that maybe the Secretary or the President doesn't want to hear what you have to say?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, no, and you know, I went to VMI [Virginia Military Institute] where I lived in the new barracks for 4 years and looked out on a statue of George Catlett Marshall for 4 years. Sir, if I failed to provide my candid advice to the Secretary, or the NSC, or the President, I think General Marshall would climb out of his grave and hunt me down.

Senator COTTON. Good, thank you. Because I think every President, every NSC, every Secretary of Defense needs that, especially from a chairman. Not to give them their candid advice when it's welcome, but even when they know it's unwelcome.

Now, as you said, though, you're advisor, you're not a decider, you're not a commander. Once the Secretary in some cases, or the President probably in most cases has made the decision, then you're on the side making sure that decision is going to be carried out by the relevant commanders, right?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. Let's look at something specific in this area now, and that's the threat of Iran's nuclear program. By some estimates say it could be just weeks away from having at least testable of not workable nuclear devices, maybe as few as a couple years away from having missiles that could hit us here in the United States. The President has said repeatedly that he wants a peaceful resolution to this crisis, but he is also said, I think as recently as last week, "If they don't make a deal, there will be bombing".

He said, for at least a decade I've known him, that Iran cannot be allowed to get a nuclear weapon. Do you agree with the President's assessment that Iran cannot be allowed to get a nuclear weapon?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, sir.

Senator COTTON. Do you agree that because of their missile programs, especially the flimsy cover of the space launch program, that this is not just a threat to our troops in the region or Israel or our Arab friends in the region, this could be an imminent and existential threat to the United States itself in just a few short years?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I think that's an accurate statement.

Senator COTTON. If the President asks for military options to support what he has said publicly, that if Iran is not willing to make a deal that there will be bombing, do you commit to provide him the best and candid advice you can about viable military options and the likely consequences of each?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I think that's what the job of the joint staff is to do. Is to provide a range of options for the President to consider and then allow him to select whatever those options work best for him.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. Finally, there's some hysteria about the prospect of the President ordering these strikes, or someone like you in uniform providing him advice that is going to lead to another forever war or another endless war.

Are you aware of operations, maybe operations against Iran, like the Tanker Wars in 1988, in which the forceful but discriminate application of military power did not lead to a forever war or an endless war, but rather led to peace and stability?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir. Those examples in our history do exist, yes.

Senator COTTON. Maybe the Qasem Soleimani strike in 2020 as well that caused Iran to pull in its horns for the rest of President Trump's first term. Thank you, General Caine.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman WICKER. You can answer that question verbally. I noticed you nodded. General Caine, you nodded your head.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir. I wasn't sure exactly what the question was, but I agree with you, Senator.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Cotton, and thank you General. Senator Blumenthal.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you General Caine for visiting my office, for your service and your fami-

lies to our Nation. You have a record that is exemplary and lengthy. You've served in the Air Force, the Air National Guard, and within the intelligence community with extraordinary distinction. This position is not one that you sought, is it?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Or ever expected?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No. No, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. The reason is quite simply that the President of the United States decided to fire the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for political and personal reasons, and I must say that I find that abhorrent, and I know that you are not going to comment in those terms on the treatment of your potential predecessor, but would you agree with me that politicization of the military is something that should be avoided at all costs?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir. The Nation and the Constitution all require a non-partisan military.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Would you agree with me that this apparent myth, because you've credibly denied it, that you wore a MAGA hat, is extremely regrettable and unfortunate?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Sir, I just know that I have always upheld my oath of office and don't believe the President said I was wearing a MAGA hat from what I've listened to the tapes.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. You don't believe he ever said it, but it has been attributed to him.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Sir, I think maybe he was talking about somebody else when I went and listened to the tapes.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Let me ask you because of your extraordinary service General, and I can't imagine anyone better qualified to answer this question. If you heard that a mission of a kind that was discussed on an unsecure platform, Signal, and you were in one of those planes about to launch on that mission against the Houthis, knowing what you do about the substance of that conversation, how would you feel?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I stand by what I said before. I think we all can agree that we need to always protect the element of surprise.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. That element of surprise was very likely lost if there had been any intercept by one of our enemies or adversaries that could be conveyed to the Houthis, correct?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I mean, sir, that's a little bit of a hypothetical question, but I am thankful as always that we protect our servicemen and women who are going into combat operations.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. But there are a lot of pilots and other military men and women who are understandably angry about that call, correct?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Sir, I've not had anybody come to me and tell me that they're angry about it. So I can't comment on that.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Have you read reports about that reaction to the call?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I have not, Senator. No.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Would you agree that that kind of reliance on Signal for that kind of conversation should be avoided in the future?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I just know that I have always used the right system for the right kinds of communications. I don't know in particular you know, what information was classified in what way on that Signal chat. I know that we must preserve the element of surprise.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. That platform is not a hardened and secure platform?

Lieutenant General CAINE. That platform is encrypted but not secure, I believe in the definition of the term secure.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Let me ask you quickly on another topic. Would you agree that the *Columbia*-class program is the Navy's—should continue to be an acquisition priority along with the *Virginia*-class?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I do think *Columbia* needs to continue forward at a pace and tempo equal to the threat.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. My time has expired. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Caine, once again, thank you for taking the time in my office to visit with me about a number of the items that you're hearing about today. I want to go back specifically to an item that Senator Fischer began talking with you about. That is with regard to the spectrum and the challenges surrounding it.

The reason why I want to use that as an example is because I know that General Milley and General CQ Brown, both in their role as the chief of staff and providing their best military opinion and advice were put in a position literally of saying to other people within other Administrations, that this particular part of the electromagnetic spectrum, which is currently controlled by the Department of Defense, is critical to our national defense.

In fact, over the last several years, I have asked in front of this particular Committee, well over two dozen uniformed officers to specifically discuss the need to maintain control of specific portions of the electronic spectrum. In particular, I've asked whether or not the 3.1 to 3.45 gigahertz band, if we were to lose that from DODs specific use, if that would negatively have or would have negative consequences for our war fighting capabilities.

I have had 100 percent agreement that if we lost that it would have negative consequences. Would you agree with that assessment?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I would, Senator.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. You will be asked at some point, because this is a valuable commodity. There's a limited amount of electromagnetic spectrum available, but there are interests within the United States that would love to have access to this without regard to what it would do or would not understanding what the impact would be on our national defense.

Are you aware that under President Trump's proposed concept of a Golden Dome or a missile protection system, that a number of the radar systems that would be required to be in effect for that to move forward, are found within the 3.1 to 3.45 portions of the spectrum because of their unique physics competencies?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I'm familiar with the basics of that frequency spectrum. I don't know what particular radars Golden Dome has brought into their mix of equipment, but that would not surprise me.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you. I just think part of the discussion that's been here today has been a concern by the Committee that any person that has the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs recognize just how serious their role is with regard to providing to a very, very group of powerful individuals, the best professional military advice that they can provide, and recognizing that while you don't control the policy that is set, your role as this Committee sees it is in many cases, the last resort to providing the right types of advice that elected leaders have to hear regardless of whether or not they want to hear it. My understanding, and once again, I'll ask you to just confirm it, you recognize that that is your primary responsibility,

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I think that's the most important part of this job and the essential part of this job. If confirmed, you have my commitment that I'll always speak truth to power.

Senator ROUNDS. Well, I think you'll find that this committee will be very supportive of you in that role. General, the B-21 Raider is one of the most capable military platforms in the world has ever seen. It will play a crucial role in any conflict the US faces against a near peer adversary because of its ability to operate in a highly contested environment. The Air Force has committed to at least 100 B-21s.

But given its dual missions of conventional long-range strike and nuclear deterrence, many of us believe that we will need a number closer to 200 bombers. If confirmed, would you be prepared to advocate for more than 100 and perhaps as many as 200 of these platforms if a review of our war plan suggested that that is what required for our operational plans moving forward?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, the last part of your question, I think is the key part for me. After the analysis portion, and, you know, mindful that I've not been confirmed for this job yet, I'd like to speak to the other joint chiefs and the combat commanders whose requirements Raider will fulfill before I commit to supporting any particular number of B-21s.

It's an essential part of our nuclear and conventional program, and certainly a key component of it. But before I commit to any number, I'd like to study the matter and come back to you.

Senator ROUNDS. But if that appears to be the case, you would not hesitate to recommend more if those studies warranted it?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I would not hesitate.

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

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

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Caine, with all due respect to you, we should not be here today. This hearing is happening only because of the unprecedented dismissal without cause of General Brown as chairman. As a highly respected military leader, General Brown faithfully served our country for decades. He provided exactly what the Constitution asked of him, the best non-partisan military advice to civilian leadership.

However, for an Administration that is claiming to be the most “transparent in history,” no reasonable justification has been provided for General Brown’s termination. Instead, General Brown’s dismissal reveals once again, President Trump’s intention to install yes men and women with fealty to him and not to the Constitution or the American people.

Now, General Caine, you said you will always speak truth to power in your responses to advanced questions, and you indicated that you would provide independent advice. But let me just mention what happens to people who stand up to President Trump. General Milley was a former Chair of Joint Chiefs, stood up to President Trump, and here’s what happened to him.

President Trump took away his security detail, his security clearance. He even took down his portrait in the Pentagon. That’s not all. General Milley is now under investigation by the Department’s Inspector General to see if you’ll be able to retire as a four-star general. It’s always a challenge to stand up to this President.

Let me just start with the two initial questions, and I’ll get to some of the questions that have to do with your fitness to serve. I ask these questions of all nominees on any of the committees on which I sit. 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I have not, Senator.

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

Lieutenant General CAINE. I have not, Senator.

Senator HIRONO. General, you’ve been asked a number of questions regarding what the President attributed to you, that it’s always been reported that you wore a MAGA hat. You testified you did not. If you did wear a MAGA hat, would that constitute partisan political activity by a uniform officer?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I did not wear any political merchandise.

Senator HIRONO. If you wore such a hat, would that constitute partisan political activity by a uniform officer? Yes or no?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I think it probably would. Yes, Senator.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you. General Caine, you’ve been asked also a number of questions about what’s being referred to as Signal Gate, and I commend the Chair of this Committee and the Ranking Member for asking for an IGA inquiry. You were the director for special access programs at the Pentagon, an office that manages our Nation’s most classified programs. Have you ever discussed classified information on an unclassified medium, such as Signal?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No, Senator. I have not.

Senator HIRONO. What would be the consequences for discussing a special access program on Signal?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, we’d have to first do an investigation. We’d have to look into the particular matters associated with it. We’d have to consult with counsel to determine what the way forward was, and then ultimately turn it over to the leadership in the Department.

Senator HIRONO. You wouldn't just let this matter drop? Which is basically what this Administration wants to do?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I think that it's a little bit of a hypothetical situation asking me about what would happen if a SAP [Special Access Program] was dropped into Signal.

Senator HIRONO. It's really not a hypothetical. It is what is confronting this Administration and what's happening. You know that we need to preserve the element of surprise. Is discussing the kinds of matters that were discussed on signal preserving the element of surprise?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I don't want to—given the fact that the Chairman and Ranking Member of an ask for an investigation, I don't want to comment on the particulars. I do want to stay at the strategic altitude and say that we should always preserve the element of surprise.

Senator HIRONO. I think it was a very simple question, whether or not talking about the things that have been reported, whether that preserved the element of surprise. I would say that if you're truly speaking truth to power, that the answer would obviously be, no, it does not preserve the element of surprise. That is why we need to have an inquiry. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I first would like to acknowledge the loss of three soldiers from the Third Infantry Division, and pray for a speedy recovery on the fourth.

General Caine, thank you so much for being in front of this Committee today, and we all understand that there's a little bit of political theatrics that always occur on this Committee, but I would like to thank you very much for your integrity and your measured responses to the questions today. You are carrying yourself with dignity and respect, and that's what we would anticipate and expect of anyone that will be serving as the Chairman of our Joint Chiefs of Staff. So thank you very much for that.

You stated that you are an unconventional leader moving forward, and I in particular, am very excited about that because you have served on Active Duty and Active Duty Air Force. But also in regards to my own service, you are a national guardsman, and thank you. It gives you a very well-rounded perspective when it comes to the men and women that serve in various capacities for our great Armed Services.

But also very important to me is the fact that you have served as an entrepreneur, and this brings a different level into the position that you are hoping to attain. That leads me into my question. I've been very focused on our defense budget, efficiency, and auditability. We spoke about this in my office. Because you have the eye of a businessman, you know that your investment dollars are very important going into a business.

So you will understand that every dollar going into our Department of Defense is also going to be very important for our war fighters and those that support them. The Department of Defense despite managing the largest discretionary budget of the Federal Government, has yet to pass a full financial audit. We understand that this failure is eroding public trust in the Department and

hinders our ability as Congress to allocate those resources effectively, and our frustrations just continue to grow.

So, General Caine, if you are confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure the DOD finally passes a full audit by 2028 as required by the law or ideally if at all possible, even sooner?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, thanks for that question. Is not only as an entrepreneur alum, but also an American taxpayer, we owe it to the Nation for the Department to pass an audit. There are very few levers that the chairman, if I'm confirmed, that the chairman can throw other than to encourage the services to be prepared for that audit. That's something that I'll take on if I'm confirmed for the job.

Senator ERNST. Yes, thank you very much for that. In regards to our Special Operations Forces (SOF), I serve as the chair of the Emerging Threats and Capabilities subcommittee, and we'll continue to advocate on behalf of our SOF. They're a very cost-effective force multiplier, and they deliver those high impact results with a very small footprint. And I know we have spoken about this, you do get that.

Cuts to SOF funding risk ceding ground to our adversaries. So, General Caine, given SOF's proven role in great power competition, do you believe a justification exists for reducing their footprint and their budget at a time when unconventional threats are on the rise?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator mindful that I'm not in the job yet, I do understand and appreciate the exponential value that SOF can bring to the competition phase that we're in right now. If confirmed, I'd like to take that on and come back to you with my thoughts on it.

Senator ERNST. Yes, thank you, and I will expect that as well.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, ma'am.

Senator ERNST. I know we could go on, I'll submit a question for the record on recruitment and retention challenges.

Senator ERNST. But I just want to close by saying I'm very grateful that President Trump has nominated you to serve as our Chairman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I do think that you will bring a different level into this position, a different eye, a different way of looking at things. We are in very challenging times. We all recognize this. We need a change. You are that change. So thank you very much for being willing to continue to serve in this capacity. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator. Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, congratulations on your nomination. We've discussed almost every member of this panel has discussed the importance of giving straight advice to the President and the Secretary of Defense. These are two very strong personalities. The Oval Office is probably the most intimidating room in the world. I hope you'll reiterate. You mentioned you owe it to them to give you the best advice. You also owe it to the country that you give them the best advice.

You mentioned to me when we discussed this before, you have been retired, you didn't expect this job, you don't need this job. Give me your straight-ahead commitment that when the chips are down, you're going to argue for your best military advice.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I don't know any other way to operate as a leader. My job, if confirmed, is to always provide best military advice to the President, the Secretary of the NSC, and to Congress, and to do so with candor every day.

Senator KING. That, as everybody has mentioned, particularly Senator Rounds mentioned, that this is really the principle responsibility of the job. We are in a very dangerous moment, as you know, there are potential conflicts and conflicts all over the world. So you're going to be called upon probably in a matter of weeks to make these kind of calls and to provide that advice to the President.

So I look forward to your honoring that commitment that you just made, and making clear not only providing advice that sounds sort of neutral, but advocating for advice, saying, this is what we believe the best military advice is. Let me move on.

It worries me sometimes that we have a tendency particularly in national security, to move our focus from one area to the other, and then we neglect the area that we're missing. What I'm very worried about now is a resurgence of terrorism. Syria potentially could become another base for ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria]. There are thousands of ISIS fighters in jails in Syria, if they're released, that could be a major challenge. West Africa is now a major area of al Qaeda activity.

Talk to me about the terrorism threat and the fact that we can't forget it because 19 people changed American history on September 11th, and it doesn't take many terrorists to create serious problems for this country and for people around the world.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, sir, I think you—I don't know that I could say it any better than you just did. We have to keep our pressure on the terrorists who would continue to like—

Senator KING. Can you be sure that you got that in the record what he just said? Go ahead.

Lieutenant General CAINE. It's not something Senator, unfortunately, we can ever take our eyes off of completely. The challenge that somebody who would want to do harm to us or to our interests around the world is not going to go away anytime soon.

Senator KING. One of the concerns that I have, we always talk about deterrence. That's the main spring of our defense strategy. But deterrence doesn't work with a terrorist, with a nuclear weapon. They don't have a capital to blow up. They don't care about dying. The defense against that eventuality, which I think is absolutely terrifying, is intelligence. I hope that you will continue to focus the forces in the Pentagon on intelligence and intervening if there's any threat of nuclear material getting into the hands of a terrorist organization.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Senator KING. Finally, in terms of your leadership within the military, and I know that you're a passionate advocate for our war fighters. One of the things that concerns me, and I'm going from this meeting to a meeting of the Veterans Affairs Committee, is the transition from Active Duty military to retired, which you have experienced.

The testimony that we've had at numerous hearings is it's inadequate. It's improved in recent years, but there are still gaps that

it's very complex and military Active Duty people going into veteran status, it turns out it's the highest propensity for suicide in the first couple of years after the transition from Active Duty.

So I hope that's something that you'll pay some attention to. I believe that as much money, effort, and time should be spent on transition out as we spend on recruiting in.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, it is a bit of an arduous process. I can personally attest to that. I appreciate your leadership on helping the veterans of the Nation to transition appropriately. It is an area of risk for sure, and I'll keep my eye on it if confirmed.

Senator KING. I hope you will. Thank you very much General, and again, congratulations on your nomination.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. Senator Cramer.

Senator CRAMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you General for your service and for your willingness to step back into the gap. While I agree that the dismissal of your predecessor was unfortunate, it's behind us, and I cannot think of a better person to replace General Brown than you. Frankly, the unconventionalness of you as the President's pick is in and of itself brilliant in my view.

But when you look at your actual history and your actual service and the diversity of it, I just can't imagine a better choice. So congratulations on that and I look forward to supporting you strongly. In your opening statement, you said some things that we hear a lot from people that come before the Committee and your response to, to Chairman Wicker's legislation dealing with the acquisition reform stuff. Very welcoming.

But everyone says that. Everyone says that, and yet I find it—and this is why, frankly, you being unconventional is encouraging to me because they all mean it, by the way, when they say it. I believe that at the moment they mean it. They mean it until the particular service that they served in or the particular agency within the service they served in, it was disrupted by the very thing they say they support.

Who we're dealing with the situation right now, perhaps the most disruptive innovator taking over, becoming the first director of the most disruptive innovative agency, The Space Development Agency, has been on leave for 3 months during a witch hunt that's began on the last day of the last Administration. Everybody that that says they're an innovator, is an innovator, except in this case, maybe we should check further into it.

All the while, satellites don't go up, all the while China goes at the speed of China. So I believe there's a cultural problem as well as we have some work to do as Congress, policymakers have work to do, the Administration has work to do, but we have a culture challenge as well.

General, I'd like you to elaborate a little bit on how we can really make the difference that you say you want to make, and I believe you do want to make, so that we aren't just consolidating all of our industry into a couple of giants, whether it be a land, airspace, sea.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, you're hitting on an area that that is a point of passion for me. We have to stop admiring the problem and we have to start executing. I do think your point about culture is where it all starts. I think we have to take an, an ownership and an entrepreneurial mindset to all of these reforms that are in front of us. We can't do this alone. We have to do it with you here in the Congress in order to actually make these changes.

I'm encouraged by the leaders who are coming into the Department who have deep substantive business background that are not known as people who admire problems. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the various leaders in order to actually move the ball, and of course, working with the Congress to execute these things without continuing to admire these challenges in front of us.

Senator CRAMER. Well, and I appreciate your reference to the new style of leaders coming in the entrepreneurs and whatnot. I have the same optimism as a result of it, but I am getting anxious about actually seeing it happen. So, maybe you're the leader that can make that a reality for us now.

You know, we get to talk to the combatant commanders. You'll get to talk to them a lot. One of the things we hear over and over from commanders, of course, is that intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, ISR, is in great need and low supply these days. The Air Force, specifically, has been on a mission to eliminate ISR as one of their key missions. It's disappeared even as a term in several of their documents in recent years.

It's not just their fault. I mean, we have a—as we've all been talking about, we have a resource challenge in our Defense Department, and we're trying to work on that. I just think we all have to do a lot more. For sure, I want to recognize that. But I also worry that there's this divide between what the commanders say they need in the field and frankly what we're seeing and where we're investing.

I would just love you to, your remaining seconds with me, expound a little bit on ISR, where you see it, you know, landing as a mission set. Maybe it's everybody has their own form, but I don't think that's very practical.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, just in my remaining 5 seconds. You know, ISR, and the ability to have indications and warnings to make decisions for commanders who hold risk is a key and essential part of our overall ability to execute the missions that we must do.

Senator CRAMER. I think that Air Force should keep it as a mission. I get that. Other services will have some form of it. But anyway, thank you. I look forward to supporting you.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Thank you, Senator.

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

Senator KAINE. Thank you, General. Good to see you. I enjoyed our visit. I would encourage my colleagues not to hold your last name against you. I share comments that some of my colleagues have made about the unfortunate circumstances with General Brown, but you didn't have anything to do with that.

I know from our conversations and my own due diligence VMI is very proud of you and folks who've worked with you in the past

who I hold in high regard, are very proud of you. A lot of the questions that have been asked, kind of trying to really drill into your ability to give the best candidate advice, I think your career has demonstrated to my satisfaction that you will do so.

One of the things that I really like about your background, and I think Senator Ernst and others have commented on it, is active and guard, DOD and private sector at the Pentagon, at the White House, at the CIA. You've seen pretty deep interaction with allies.

You've really seen the breadth of our military mission in a way that I think is the kind of experience that would inform that judgment that you need to provide. In fact, in a way, the role of the Head of the Joint Chiefs, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, as Senator Cotton was walking you through the work that you did at the CIA, was a little bit the same role.

Why don't you describe in a little more detail that posting to the CIA ?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Senator KAINE. What your job was in that, because I think it's almost analogous, the advice you are providing to the CIA director, best military advice, is pretty analogous to the advice you'd be providing to SEC DEF [Secretary of Defense] and the and the Commander-in-Chief.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, thank you for that question. You know, I do agree. The ADMA, the Associate Director for Military Affairs, was actually established by the Congress to detail a three star military officer over to the CIA under title 50 authorities in order to provide best military advice to the director, the deputy director, and to work daily with the secretary, the chairman, the combatant commanders, and the service chiefs in order to globally integrate same functions that the chairman has, in order to globally integrate CIA and DOD activities.

If confirmed, I'll continue to do that, working with the best of the title 10 forces, the best of title 50, what the State Department can bring to the table, what the rest of the interagency can bring to the table, along with our allies and partners. So, while I'm mindful that I've not led at the four-star level, this is not a command job that I'm being considered for. It's an advisory job, and there's very similar traits to the last job in this one.

Senator KAINE. The posting that you had to the CIA for this important role, was that a—were you delegated by the SEC DEF to do that, or did you like interview with the CIA to get that post?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I was nominated by the Department and interviewed by the CIA. As far as I understand it, the CIA made the selection.

Senator KAINE. But you were the nominee of the Department. So, I do think that the role is an important one. The one thing I don't see in your resume, but I suspect it's probably there, and I just—your resume's too long, is interaction that you've had with the State Department over the course of your career. Could you talk about that a little bit?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir. My first real substantive interaction with the State Department was actually when I was a White House fellow at USDA, and we were charged with working on the Global Pandemic Plan surrounding avian influenza H5N1.

Senator Kaine. During the Bush administration?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir. During the Bush administration. That really began my substantive appreciation for what the diplomatic element of power can do, and that continued through my time in the military overseas, and have deep regard and appreciation for what the State Department can do for us.

Senator Kaine. I think all of us at times have been frustrated with silos. The states and their silo, intel and theirs, DOD Pentagon, and their own silo. Sometimes having the different perspectives is great. If everybody's just singing the exact same note, you sometimes wonder whether it's groupthink. So, getting some different perspectives can be helpful. The fact that you've been in all parts of the kind of broad national security family gives me some real confidence in your judgment coming into this position.

Last thing I'll just ask is what would you say has been your signature experience of the course of your career in terms of interacting with our allies?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Probably sir the scud hunt in 2003, where I had the opportunity to work very closely with our British, UK, and Australian allies, which was absolutely a coalition effort from day one. We went to war alongside them, and I've thankfully sustained all of those relationships now. I have deep relationships with our closest allies, and if confirmed, look forward to continuing those.

Senator Kaine. I'm a strong promoter of the AUKUS [Australia, United Kingdom, United States] framework and the fact that you've had those relationships in the past and maintain them, that's a positive.

I yield back. Thank you.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Thank you, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Where were you exactly during that scud operation, sir?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, sir, the location that we flew out of, I think is still classified. Happy to talk about that in closed session.

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

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman.

General, congratulations. You've got the right background. I think you're going to do a great job. Always like to see business guys succeed. So, that's fun. This is all doable. I mean, you look at where we are. We've got Communist China's, built a military to defeat us. We've got allies that have not invested like they should have. We've got Iran, which appears to have, you know, enough money now to continue to support the Houthis, Hamas, Hezbollah.

We've got China all over Latin America. I mean, what we have to do to defend the freedom of this country and try to do our best to police a world. Is this actually doable? Do are you optimistic? Are you pessimistic?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I'm always an optimistic leader.

Senator SCOTT. Why do you believe that we can do it?

Lieutenant General CAINE. There's a lot of reasons, but the power of the American spirit is what leaps out to me right off the bat. There are very few things that we set our mind to that we can

achieve. Despite some of the very serious challenges in front of us, we've always rogered up to those challenges.

Senator SCOTT. Do you think the budget that we're going to be able to provide is going to allow you to be able to do the things you need to do?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I won't get in front of the President, or OMB [Office of Management and Budget], on what budget markers they set. What I will do confirm to you and commit to you, is that whatever capital we're given will make the best out of it.

Senator SCOTT. In Florida we have 20 military bases and three unified commands. One is Homestead, and we talked about this a little bit. It's not that far from Cuba. Homestead is a little bit north of Key West, and it hasn't had a dedicated flying mission in a while. It seems like it's, it would be an important base. Do you see a future for Homestead? Do you think it ought to have a flying mission?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I won't get out in front of the service, but if confirmed, I'll definitely talk to the Air Force Reserve Command and the Air Force to see what they're thinking around flying mission at Homestead.

The history of that unit, and that base is exemplary. They were with us in the Scud Hunt, a small component of them were there with us back in 2003. I've got deep appreciation for the culture and history of that unit.

Senator SCOTT. This is the first time I have the opportunity to be the chairman of the Subcommittee on Seapower. As you know, we have not been able to build ships, maintain ships, keep ships ready. How do you think that's going to change?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, I think it's a significant challenge for us, and we've got to up our game. I'm encouraged by the SEC Navs focus on this, and we've got to get to our congressionally mandated number of 355 ships as soon as possible, which includes our ability to sustain them and repair them around the world. We've got real limits right now,

Senator SCOTT. According to the Navy, they provide the combatant commanders with 40 percent of their requirements. Didn't make much sense in business. If one division need, well, you know, they need to deliver 40 percent, but it's work, we'd based the budget on the requirements needed. Do you think there's a different way we ought to be allocating resources?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I'm sorry, could you repeat the question again?

Senator SCOTT. Command and commanders that, you know, they're only getting a portion of what they're asking. Is there a better way to allocate the resources?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I appreciate the question. You know, that the challenge is that we have to globally integrate all the combatant commands, and there's never a loss for tension between the COCOMs. What I trust is that the joint staff and the joint chiefs are looking carefully and thoughtfully considering where that balance is, and then passing those options to the secretary for him to decide on where that allocation may be. Until we have such capacity that there's no need to do that, I think we're

going to continue to balance those capabilities and capacities across all the COCOMs.

Senator SCOTT. So, my final question is, what drives you? Why do you want to do this? Let's say you did this for 4 years, what would your goal be at the end of those 4 years that you said we got this accomplished?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, doing my part to make sure that we have a safe and prosperous United States of America. That the military element of power has delivered the deterrence capability that we needed, and we've taken care of our families and our force along the way.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you. You'll do a great job.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. Senator Mullin.

Senator MULLIN. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you, General, for wanting to step back into service. Your retirement didn't last too long, and the idea that you're willing to jump back and serve just speaks volume to the true inner spirit that you have. I want to thank you for doing that. You have made a tremendous amount of sacrifice already and, you know, eyes wide open what this job is going to entail. You have some real challenges ahead of you.

I want to start first talking about the defense industry. I know you're familiar with the so-called "last Supper" in 1994 to where we basically encouraged our defense industry to consolidate. I'm a firm believer in looking back and looking at things of where it went wrong. Because since then, our defense industry really hasn't been to deliver on time and on budget on some of the most critical needs we have.

We've seen from our planes in the air, to our ships in the shipyards, to the equipment that we're needing is constantly behind what we're needing today. When we ask for technology that's being used against us or that our adversaries have already may achieved. When we ask our defense industry to deliver, it's 5 to 7 years, if we're lucky, it's 3, and yet, it's never on time.

Now, you come from a unique position, being Active, being Reserve, and being in the private sector. I feel like that this is one of the biggest threats that we have. We have a technology need today, and it's being delivered 5 years from now. We are 5 years behind. How do you plan on tackling this? Because I do feel like this is the biggest threat to our military today.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I agree. It's a huge problem. Technology is evolving so quickly that every time we field capabilities, they're obsolete oftentimes when they hit the force. That's not acceptable. I think it goes back to something that the Chairman and I talked about at the beginning of the hearing, and that's related to having agility in our requirements and building a system of acquisition that allows us to take advantage of the current technologies, not those of the past.

If confirmed, I'll work with the joint staff, the joint chiefs, and of course OSD to pick up the speed, pace, and tempo of fielding the capabilities that we need that are not obsolete.

Senator MULLIN. How do you plan on bringing private industry back in to actually go around some of our primes that are incapable of delivering in a quick fashion?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I think we need a mix of both startups that are new entrants to the industry, but we also do need the primes. The answer is all of the above. There are components that the primes can only do, and we have to leverage that capability. Then there's a bunch of things that new entrants will do to move forward. So, I think the answer is, as I mentioned, all of the above.

Senator MULLIN. I agree that the primes are important, but they have felt they have failed miserably on staying on budget and on time and being adequate to delivering today's needs. I don't like rewarding those that have not delivered on adequately when we've asked. We know that's been a problem. So, holding them accountable is important.

Now, I want to switch gears real quick about Afghanistan. It's deeply personal to me, and I know it is to you and anyone else that had the privilege of serving the Nation in Afghanistan. But because our disastrous withdrawal, I feel like there's a hesitation in our military and our military family to actually step forward and make that sacrifice again.

I think there's a lot of doubt that the United States is able to stand behind what our first mission is, and then to be able to bring pride to those that sacrificed. With that brings a morale issue to those that are still serving. Those are sometimes with the most experience in there. I feel like we may be having a drain in knowledge of those that have sacrificed so much.

How do you plan on retaining those and restoring that trust back in the military that says, 'Hey, we got you. We're not going to leave you on the battlefield. We're not going to let your sacrifice die, but we're going to let you walk away with a tremendous amount of pride knowing that your sacrifice meant something to this country.'

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I appreciate the question. I think that's one of our most important jobs as leaders, whether it be at the chairman level or all the way down to the platoon leader level, is inspiring those who serve. Taking care of them always, but also making sure they know how much we appreciate them, and their families, and their service.

Senator MULLIN. But that doesn't address what happened.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, you mean in Afghanistan?

Senator MULLIN. Yes.

Lieutenant General CAINE. You know, that withdrawal was not what anyone would've wanted. Very difficult circumstances. I think the officers on the ground did the best that they could with the policy decisions that were made. We mourned the loss of the 13 at Abbey Gate, and we have to hold those accountable if there was something for them to be held accountable for. I know the Department is looking into that. But again, most of those professional military officers were executing the direction and orders of policy-makers above them.

Senator MULLIN. Thank you.

Chairman WICKER. General, is it accurate to say that Afghanistan was a 'forever war'?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I'm not sure what the doctrinal definition of a forever war is, but it certainly took a—it was a long, long time.

Chairman WICKER. What was the engagement of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and American troops at the time of our disastrous withdrawal?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, sir, I think there were still U.S. Forces on the ground and still NATO Forces on the ground. I'm not exactly sure what your question is.

Chairman WICKER. Were there casualties?

Lieutenant General CAINE. At the very end, there were. Yes, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Oh, no, in the last year before the disastrous withdrawal. There were no American casualties?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Not that I'm aware.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you. Senator Gillibrand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General Caine, for being here. Thank you for your family, for their support of this appointment. Based on your understanding of relevant classification and authorities, do you believe that any of the information that was shared on the Signal chat was classified at the time it was sent, particularly the details about timing of the target and for the manned U.S. aircraft and other details related to the exact plan?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I didn't see the original CONOP [Contingency Operations Plan]. As I mentioned earlier in my testimony, I think we should always preserve the element of surprise. That's a key and essential thing that we owe our warfighters.

Senator GILLIBRAND. What would you have done if you were on that text chain?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, first, I wasn't and I think that was a political partisan text chain with policymakers at the political level only. So, I can't hypothetically guess what I would've done, but I would not have—we would not have—

Senator GILLIBRAND. —I wouldn't call that a political or partisan text chain. It had the head of intelligence, it had the head of CIA, it had our Secretary of Defense, it had the National Security top advisors for the President, and to share that type of information from a military perspective, I can't imagine if a subordinate of yours shared that type of military information in an unclassified setting, such as a Signal text chain, they would be fired, would they not?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, as I mentioned earlier, I think, the Chairman and Ranking Member have called for an investigation, and so, I feel like it's appropriate for me to withhold comment until such time that it's either determined that there will be an investigation or not.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Well, what would you do in a different scenario if you see classified information or war plans, information, or tactical information on an unclassified chain? What would you do to stop the conversation?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, I think I would weigh in and stop it if I was a, a part of it, but in this case, I wasn't.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. The worldwide proliferation of unmanned aerial systems is an undeniable national security threat, creating challenges in both funding and capability. How do you believe the Department and Joint Force should approach these two challenges of funding and capability?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, it's definitely a big challenge in front of us. The mass and simultaneity of especially small UAS [Unmanned Aircraft System] is one that is concerning to me, both from a technical standpoint, but also from a policy standpoint. As I'm sure you're aware, we have somewhat limited capabilities in some cases inside the domestic U.S. to stop some of these UASs. I think we have to continue to fund the research and development to counter them.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Well, let's make it more direct to you. When you have drones hovering over Langley for a 2-week period, appearing and disappearing without our technology being able to track or trace it, without having the authorities to follow the UAS to its point of departure and its point of return, that creates a serious national security risk if those UAS are indeed being operated by Russia, China, or Iran. So, what will you do to protect the military bases and the military secrets that are under your purview?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, if confirmed, I'll continue to put the appropriate amount of pressure and interest on that to work in conjunction with the Commander of NORAD [North American Aerospace Defense Command], NORTHCOM, General Guillot, who's doing a fantastic job on this issue and others to continue to work with the private sector, to find the capabilities that we must have, that we currently don't have to prevent this from happening again.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Which capabilities don't you have, do you have the, do you lack the authorities or do you lack the technological capability,

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I think it's a little bit of a mix of both. There are some authorities? issues related to airspace directly over U.S. military bases, and then transitioning outside of the geographical boundaries of that military base and who has cognizant authority over those small UASs at that point. Then, I think there's some technological challenges in the states around stopping them and actually downing them. There's always collateral damage concerns in those types of things.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Will you seek the authority to be able to take down UASs above military bases?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I'll speak with the Commander of NORAD, NORTHCOM, and the relevant State and local authorities to make sure that we're illuminating those discussion points.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Senator Cotton and I have legislation to do exactly that, and I would request that you review that legislation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Do you have co-sponsors, Senator?

Senator GILLIBRAND. I don't know yet, but I can ask.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you General, for being here, your service, and congratulations on your nomination. You're nominated to be the senior military advisor to the President of the United States. What a chore. I remember a time when generals and retired senior officers would avoid political discussions. It was extremely uncommon for a former senior officer to even endorse a candidate for political office.

Lately, that approach seems to be an exception, not to rule. Some of your predecessors even appear to support political positions while in uniform. Your predecessor was deeply involved in politics, which should not be part of this approach.

General CAINE, in your own words, how would you describe to this Committee the importance of your responsibility and commitment to provide the best military advice, even when that advice might differ from what the President of the United States believes?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, thank you for that question. It ultimately is the whole job is to be the principal military advisor to the President, and pursuant to that job, provide the President with best military advice even when the President may have different feelings about it. That is exactly what the Nation pays me to do. So, if confirmed, that is exactly what I'll do.

Senator TUBERVILLE. General, when you take this job, what's your No. 1 concern?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, right now, the No. 1 concern is the passage of time and ensuring that the joint force is ready, properly armed with the right capabilities out at the tactical edge, properly globally integrated with the services themselves, with the other elements of the interagency, with our allies and partners, and with the private sector, and ready to go tonight. That means their families are ready, they're ready, they're properly trained and equipped. So, we have much to do.

Senator TUBERVILLE. We all know that the machines that we build, the guns and the bullets that we have, everything at the disposal of the warfighter. But it's usually and is the people involved. Our recruiting has much improved in the last couple of months. What do you see your role as an advisor to the President in recruiting for our all of our military?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, we don't have much of a military without the incredible 2.8 million members of the joint force that selflessly join the service to do something more important than themselves. To answer your question, if confirmed, I think it's an opportunity for me to be another voice of encouragement for those young men and women who have the capability and meet the standards to come into the service and do something that they will forever hold so high in their past history. The chance to serve this Nation is a special privilege for those of us that have come into the cloth of our Nation and served. I hope that I'll be able to encourage others to do so.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Being the chairman of the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Armed Services, we had a hearing last week with our academies, Naval Academy and Air Force Academy. I would hope in the future, and I know your job is to inform our President and keep him advised of everything, but I think that your job, too, would be able to work with our academies in terms of our leadership, help build that leadership to a higher standard.

To keep it to a higher standard and let our young men and women know that that's where it all starts.

If we don't have leadership, we don't have anything. I think that's a good point, that it pass on to the President. Obviously, your information you give to the President is going to be No. 1, but also build and help build our military is going to be a huge part of you, I think, a part of your job. What do you think?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I agree, Senator.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. You're here. Senator Duckworth.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to begin by expressing my deep gratitude for the outstanding service of General Brown and so many other dedicated military leaders who were unjustly dismissed as part of a politically motivated purge of senior Department of Defense officials.

General Caine, I really enjoyed our conversations we've had recently over the last couple of weeks. If you are confirmed as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, you will serve as the President's principal military advisor, and be expected to bring your military judgment to bear, to advise against illegal, immoral, and advisable courses of action, regardless of partisan pressure.

However, we are in a moment where that very principle is under strain, such as with the dismissal of Judge Advocates General responsible for providing critical legal expertise because their counsel did not align with the political preferences of Secretary Hegseth. This pattern has had a chilling effect on the open, honest discourse essential to national security decisionmaking at the highest level.

Now, the lives of self servicemembers and future of our national security depend on expert qualified leaders who understand that their decisions have real life or death consequences. How will you insulate and empower general officers across the force to remain professional and importantly nonpartisan and provide unbiased advice to civilian policymakers without fear of coercion, undue partisanship, or retaliation?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I thank you. I also enjoyed our time together. This is the whole job. This is why you and I both took our oath of office. It's what is contained in our commission and aligned with the Constitution, and so, that is what the Nation expects out of our professional officer corps, I'm sure what we'll continue to do moving forward in history.

Senator DUCKWORTH. And will you do your best to ensure that the general officer corps, those who give that advice, remain unbiased and non-partisan?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Always.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Well, maybe bias on the side of the servicemembers and national security.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, yes, ma'am, but

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, and it's great to see a guard guy at that table going through the confirmation hearing, so.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Thank you, ma'am.

Senator DUCKWORTH. You'll also be the senior most uniformed officer entrusted with being a model and a leader for the joint force. Recently, we've witnessed troubling signs, signs of blurred lines between private power and public trust. A striking lack of regard for

protecting vital national security secrets and the absence of accountability for top leadership; from Elon Musk receiving invitations for briefings on China, to a pattern of mishandling classified information, to Secretary Hegseth bringing family members into sensitive meetings with allies and partners. Very concerning.

We have also seen a concerted effort to skirt transparency to the American people on the use of force with decisionmaking being done over disappearing Signal chat. It seems like this Administration is more interested in keeping secrets from the American people than protecting national security secrets for the American people. You have experience running some of our most sensitive operations. So, you know that even the need for secrecy to enable mission success does not mean skirting accountability to the American people.

Do you commit to providing the legally required transparency to Congress and the American people over decisions related to the use of force even in the face of pressure from civilian leadership?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, Senator.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Another concerning focus of this Administration has been to distract the military from its core mission approval of protecting the American people from external threats by redirecting military personnel assets and platforms to domestic law enforcement missions.

President Trump may have learned from his first term that asking one of your Presidents to deploy the military to fire on civilian protestors was a no-go. So, instead, he has turned to form insidious tactics linking criminal activities or undesired political speech to hostile governments like Venezuela or terrorist groups like Hamas in order to legitimize military involvement.

In fact, this kind of threat inflation is exactly what dictators do. The separation between military missions and civilian law enforcement is a core tenet of our democracy, and exists not only to protect the rights of American citizens, but also to preserve the integrity of our Armed Forces.

When military personnel are thrust into law enforcement missions, it places them at risk of moral injury of being asked to enforce partisan concerns rather than to defend the Nation. It compromises not just their mission, but their conscience. What steps will you take to ensure that U.S. military personnel or assets are not inappropriately used in law enforcement capacities that distract the military from its core mission undermine readiness and threaten public trust?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, thank you for that question. I think there's strong systems in place, legal systems in place that prevent any missteps there. It ranges from title 32 authorities to title 10 authorities and have no reason to believe at this point that those are insufficient in any way.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. I enjoy working with you, General.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Thank you.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Mr. Chairman.

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

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to begin by agreeing with our ranking member and others, you, Lieutenant General Caine on commending General C.Q. Brown for his exceptional four decades of service. I fully agree with the accolades he's receiving in this committee, and wish him and his family the best.

I've worked, served under, met with hundreds of flag officers in my positions as a U.S. senator, as a U.S. marine, and I will say, General, I think you are one of the most impressive flag officers I've met with. I don't say that lightly, like I said, I've met with hundreds. I think it's the combination of all the experiences, to Senator Duckworth's point, Guard, Reserve private sector. I mean, you're bringing a lot in here, and I think that's going to be very, very important.

I do want to touch on this topic that we're playing up a lot here on keeping politics out of our military. I couldn't agree more with that. I think it's really important. Big part of my career here. I've tried to make sure that happens, but I will say we're not talking about what just happened the last 4 years. I think the military was politicized in a huge way, particularly from the civilian leaders who were pushing left wing theories on the military, pushing climate change over a ship building.

The Under Secretary for Policy came before this committee and told us that our military is, 'systemically racist.' It's ridiculous, right? Do you believe our military is systemically racist? Is that what you saw in your 30-plus years of service?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No, senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. So, do you agree, just to make 100 percent sure, what the Secretary of Defense's testimony when he came here, that our are military professionals, uniform professionals, need to remain apolitical and committed to our Constitution identified not as republicans or democrats, but warriors and leaders. Is that your commitment?

General CAINE. It is, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. Will you commit to this committee to doing that?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I will, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you. I'm not going to let this hearing go by without a famous quote from the father of the U.S. Air Force, Billy Mitchell, who was talking about a certain place in the world. He said, 'Whoever controls this place controls the world. It is the most strategic place in the world.' What place was Billy Mitchell talking about, General?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Alaska.

Senator SULLIVAN. Do you agree with Billy Mitchell's incredibly insightful analysis?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Mitchell was a brilliant airpower.

Senator SULLIVAN. That's a yes, I assume, you're saying?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay. Well, look, our adversaries agree. You and I talked about this in my office. Again, I appreciate the hearing. We've had huge incursions, huge number of incursions in the last 2 years. Russian and Chinese. Joint Russian and Chinese strategic bomber task forces into our ADIZ [Air Defense Identification Zone], joint Russian and Chinese naval task forces into our EEZ

[Exclusive Economic Zone] up in Alaska. We are on the front lines of great power competition.

With regard to our adversaries, you and I talked about infrastructure in Alaska for our military. The President after his election said, we will ensure Alaska gets even more defense investments as we rebuild our military, especially as Russia and China are making menacing moves in the North Pacific. That's from the Commander-in-Chief.

The INDOPACOM, NORTHCOM commander recently said that this very vital naval base, former naval base, and ADAK, is a former sub base, air base, huge fuel depot, one of the biggest fuel depots for our Navy in the world. We have a Navy team there right now this week looking at reopening that. Can I get your commitment to work with this committee and me on infrastructure that can protect our northern flying—because as the NORTHCOM commander recently testified, these incursions are only going to increase.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me talk about another issue. It doesn't come up a lot. You talked about urgent action reform to go faster with greater efficiency. I think one of our unsung success stories in this regard is 8(a) contractors working with the Department of Defense. DOD can use these 8(a) contractors if they want. They don't have to, but they bring efficiency, speed, low-cost contracts, and quality services.

I saw a recent example of an integrated request from DOD to have a wheeled vehicle that can put a harpoon anti-ship system on it. This 8(a) a contractor got it designed in 2 weeks, got it produced in a month—or I'm sorry, with inside of 12 months. They're already in Taiwan. They're going to produce 20 more in 18 months. The OEMs, big primes, if they tried to do that, would've taken them 10 years.

Can you commit to me to continue to work with these small businesses that I think deliver readiness, efficiency, and modernization?

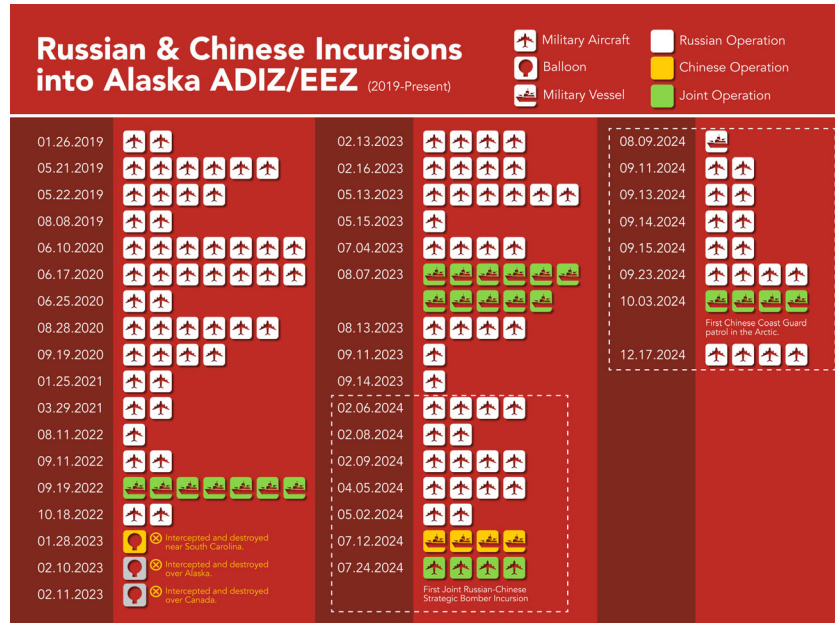
Lieutenant General CAINE. I will, Senator.

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

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

Without objection, that chart will be copied into the record.

[The information referred to follows:]



Chairman WICKER. Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed for holding this hearing. My thanks to you, General Caine, for meeting with me. We had a great conversation about Nevada, and for your willingness to serve.

But I'm going to keep on the subject of Nevada assets and documenting exposure at classified locations. From your time as a director of special access programs and from your own experience serving at a data mass location, a duty station whose location and existences classified. You're familiar with the delicate balance between protecting sensitive information and ensuring that servicemembers' records actually reflect their service-connected injuries at those sensitive or data mass locations.

I've heard from constituents who served at such locations like the Nevada Test and Training Range, who believe they were exposed to radiation from our days of conducting explosive nuclear weapons testing and to burn pits, which dispose of classified waste.

However, DOD does not classify the range as a place where exposure occurred. Despite the Department of Energy (DOE) providing a presumption of exposure for their personnel who served there at these exact same locations within the range. Because their service records are data masked, as you know, these veterans can't even prove to the VA that they were ever actually stationed there.

In fact, Nevada, there are six DOE covered facilities, most of most of which are within the Nevada Test and Training Range, where DOE employees presumed to have been exposed to a radiation. But for our servicemembers, the VA only recognizes one, the Nevada test site as a presumed exposure location. So, one such facility that is covered for DOE, but not for DOD, is the Tonopah test

range, which is both A DOE and Air Force installation. Portions of the range are still fenced off and contaminated.

A 1975 environmental assessment acknowledged the contamination and the harm it would cause, but the airmen, they were never told. They do not have a presumption of exposure as their DOE counterparts they served alongside with do, and further adding insult to this, they can't even show that they were there. All of this have prevented them from being able to receive their well-deserved veterans' benefits.

I know we talked about this. We need to make this right, and I'm committed to fixing this problem in this year's NDAA. I hope that I can count on your support to making it happen. Will you commit to working with me, of course, and the Committee to find a solution that provides DOD, the presumption of exposure at such data mass locations, and provides those who served, and are serving at these locations, sufficient documentation so they can submit their health-related issues, without ever compromising the security of their service details?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, thank you for raising this in our office call, and thank you for your leadership on this matter. I do think we owe our servicemembers a way forward through these important jobs that they have, that they can never talk about. I do commit to staying close with you on this matter, and trying to sort out a way that we can help them transition, take the credit and the risk that they've bought in the service of their nation with them into the next chapter of their lives.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I appreciate it, and I know the men and women who serve there will be very pleased if we're able to do this. It really means a lot to them.

I just have about a minute we left. So, I want to just ask about the force of the future, because over the course of your service, you've gone through the rigors of actually training in Nevada skies while stationed at Dallas Air Force Base, thank you.

You know, personally, our military readiness depends on meeting immediate warfighting needs while preparing for potential conflict our country might face. It requires evolving and changing how we train to fight. Which is one of the reasons I fought so hard to make sure Nevada's military training regions are modernized, keeping pace with emerging threats.

So, if confirmed, how would you prioritize investments in readiness, in modernization, in force structure, especially in these emerging domains like cyber warfare and AI [artificial intelligence]?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, we've got to train to the realistic threat in order to ensure that we're prepared if we ever do go into conflict. Part of that is making sure that our training ranges either live virtual or constructive accurately replicate the threat so that our warfighters can train to the realistic threat. I think we still have some work to do both in our fiscal range, at physical ranges, and in our virtual ranges. If confirmed, that'll be an area along the readiness line of effort that I spend some time on.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I look forward to working with you on that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator Rosen. Senator Budd.

Senator BUDD. Thank you, Chairman. General, it's good to see you, again. Thanks for your willingness to serve. I enjoyed our meeting in my office last week. It was a great discussion.

Let's talk for a minute about China. You know, their strategy for expanding their power, it's operated a lot in using gray zone tactics or military and civil action, somewhere between the boundaries of peace and war, and it's difficult to confront with conventional military force. Admiral Paparo, he stated that Special Operations Forces are crucial for competing in the gray zone, and that is under invested in the Pacific command.

Can you talk about your views on the role of SOF at all stages of conflict and what investments should be made to grow these capabilities?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator thanks for that question. You know, as somebody who's proudly been a part of the Special Operations Forces, I appreciate greatly the exponential return that those forces can provide to the Nation. When I think about creating multiple dilemmas for Xi Jinping, many of those dilemmas are created through America's special operations forces where we build great partnerships, we help train our allies and partners, when required we're able to execute sensitive missions that help us to illuminate the threat in a more thoughtful way.

I would agree with Admiral Paparo's views on soft forces in the Pacific, but would defer to General Fenton who probably has strong views on that. If confirmed, I'll consult with him on these matters.

Senator BUDD. Thank you.

I appreciate your commentary that they deliver an exponential return, I believe indeed they do. In your advanced policy questions, you underscore the importance of synchronization between the DOD and the intelligence community. How do you propose we do that?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, it really starts with trusting and deep relationships. You know, I am fortunate in my last job to have learned the value of making sure that the best of the title 10 community is linked up with the best of the title 50 community to get to almost title 60-like outcomes.

I realize that there is no title 60, but I put that in quotation marks. You know, and if confirmed, I'll continue with that pathway forward. We have an incredible associate director for military affairs at the CIA now Lieutenant General Mike Downs, who carries on and is probably doing a much better job than I ever did over there.

If confirmed, will continue to build on those relationships. I think it extends beyond just the DOD and CIA relationship. It extends into the relationship that we have with the State Department. It extends into the relationship that we have with the other elements of the interagency as well.

Senator BUDD. Thank you.

Also, in your advanced policy questions, you mentioned that the service chiefs and combatant commanders, they use their unfunded priorities list as essential tools in communicating to us here in Congress the ideas where, or in the areas where additional re-

sources could significantly enhance military readiness and capabilities. You also State that unfunded priority lists, they're not the only tool to build a strategy informed defense budget. Where do you think the DOD is currently leveraging to align the defense budget and the defense strategy, and where's there room for improvement on that?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, you know, I'm not yet back in the service, so I need to read the current version of the National Defense Strategy. If I'm—

Senator BUDD. Best guess outside looking in, sir.

Lieutenant General CAINE. I think we need to continue our efforts in the Pacific, and that would be my early read without actually being into the Intel record.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. Last year, combatant commanders, they testified before this Committee speaking to the value and the relevance of the F-15E Strike Eagle and their respective areas of responsibility. So, as a fighter pilot with extensive experience in combat and Homeland defense missions, can you speak to the value and utility of the fourth-generation fleet, specifically the F-15E and the F-16, which you flew, and whether you find it wise to reduce these inventories prior to taking delivery of the potential replacements? I guess it's the divest to invest strategy. If you'd comment on that, please?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, Senator, thanks for that question. You know, what we can't do is leave something uncovered in the interim. When I think about at least the F-16, for example, they're predominantly tasked with Homeland defense at this point in time, and, you know, we can't ever let another 9/11 happen.

So, we have to make sure that we do not divest so much that we lose coverage in places that we must have to sustain that combat capability. We obviously need a probably fourth, and fifth gen, and sixth gen mix for a while until we get to the point where we're all where we need to be in sixth gen.

Senator BUDD. Thank you.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Thank you, sir.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. Senator Warren.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations.

So, if confirmed, you would serve as the principal military advisor to the President and swear an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States. President Trump once described your predecessor, General CQ Brown as, "an outstanding leader", and it's true, CQ Brown served for 40 years in seven assignments across four combatant commands.

The President's removal of the only Black officer and removal of the only female officer from the Joint Chiefs of staff has sent a chilling message about who is and who is not welcome in our military. This worries me deeply about the future of our military and the defense of our Nation.

I am also concerned that President Trump wants to turn the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs into just another political position. Last year, President Trump claimed that you once said you would kill for him and then you slapped a MAGA hat on. I know that others have disputed that story, but it raises questions about whether

you were selected because Donald Trump thinks that you would be loyal to him rather than to the Constitution of the United States.

Secretary Hegseth has now removed the top legal advisors for military services and recommended replacements at a lower rank. So, Lieutenant General Caine, if confirmed, your job will be to present your best military advice. Do you agree that in order to be able to comply with the law and make sure that your advice complies with the law that military commanders need legal advisors with both enough expertise and a high enough rank that they will be listened to during this process?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, Senator. I know I've always had great legal advice regardless of what rank they were, but I do agree.

Senator WARREN. So, you think that you need people who have good advice, but do you think it helps in making sure that others—I'm glad that you listen to good advice no matter where it comes from—but that others are more willing to listen if the people offering legal advice have high enough rank to carry some weight in the room when those decisions are taking place?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, Senator. Although, as I mentioned, I've sincerely had great legal advice from O-5s to O-7s. I think it's the officer and their professionalism and intellect versus what rank they have. I do appreciate the efforts to ask the question about what rank they should be, but would defer to the secretary on what rank he would want them to be.

Senator WARREN. I have to say that that gives me some real concern because the whole point of elevating the rank was the concern that not enough people were listening to good legal advice. While I appreciate that you say you listen, we need people to listen who are making decisions up and down the line.

I understand Lieutenant General Caine that the circumstances of your nomination are beyond your control, but they also place a significant burden on you to show leadership, to restore public confidence in the military, and to show that you work for the American people. I've long been concerned by senior Pentagon leaders who trade on their time in public service to cash out afterwards to work for defense contractors. That is why during his confirmation hearing, General Brown agreed that he would not become a lobbyist or join the board of a defense contractor after he resigned.

Lieutenant General Caine, are you willing to demonstrate that you're taking this job to serve the American people and commit that after you leave this job, you'll not work for any major defense contractors or companies that are affected by your official actions?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, for myself, I've got no intent to do so.

Senator WARREN. Okay. So, you can commit to that?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, Senator. That's not my intent.

Senator WARREN. President Trump's removal of highly qualified and talented military leaders is a permanent stain on this Nation's history, as well as a blow to our ability to recruit the force that we need to compete with China.

If confirmed, you will have an important responsibility to show the American people that you will defend our Nation with integrity,

that you will follow the law, and that you will lead our men and women in uniform with integrity.

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much, Senator, and we'll now move to Senator Schmitt.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's good to see you again, General. Congratulations.

Let me first by start by saying I think the people who talk the most about making sure you give advice to President Trump have no experience with President Trump and interpersonally, I should say, and he does seek out advice among a lot of people.

I think that your background and your experience will be invaluable to him as he asks tough questions, and you give honest advice as you've committed here today. So anyway, I think the dynamic's going to be great. I think your background and experience really prepare you very well for this important role.

So, I wanted to ask you about a couple of things where I think that your experience will play an important role in specific decisions. So, this great powers competition that we are, you know, with China, I was really happy to see President Trump and Secretary Hegseth move quickly on NGAD and not just deciding that we were going to move forward with next generation air dominance, but actually selecting the F-47 so we can move forward on this.

I think that was a bold stroke of leadership and decisiveness that we need right now. That aircraft will see further, go faster, carry bigger payloads, which matter a lot in the Indo-Pacific. With your experience, I know that you can appreciate that.

But one of the big challenges we have, has been mentioned by a few already, is just the inability for us to go from point A to point B. When we recognize a problem, how do we solve the problem? Everyone recognizes that it's an issue. But we haven't made a whole lot of progress up until this point. I believe there is a commitment to do something about it.

You and I talked about this at our office. In your view, what would we do differently if we were at war right now? Like, if we're at war, what would we do differently than we're doing right now on the procurement side and the execution side?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, thanks for the question. You know, the Chairman's bill builds on a book that was written about the defense industrial base back in the mid-'30's. I think if we were in a gunfight at this point in time, we'd be doing a lot more with a greater sense of urgency than we probably have right now. If I'm confirmed, I'll carry that sense of urgency that I think we share into the Department and into the joint force to make sure that we do not end up in a case where our young war fighters do not have the kit that they need prior to them needing it.

Senator SCHMITT. Yes. That overwhelming force that we need to have that advantage that we have is just critical. And the concern that I have is that we talk a lot about it, but it's we have to move forward on this. We have to move forward.

So, again, before I run out of time. Again, your varied experience in the military and now outside, I think, give you a glimpse of one of the challenges that we face, too. So, Missouri is—sort of a Mis-

souri asset. Here is the home of Whiteman Air Force Base, which is more broadly known as the home of the B-2 stealth bomber and soon to be the B-21. But the 442d Fighter Wing is also there. The 442d Fighter Wing like many of these units punch above its weight class, has flown the A-10 in combat missions for decades.

The A-10's going away, and I think there's a frustration that there hasn't been a follow-on mission named here. We talked about this in my office, and there's opportunities, whether it's in the short-term, the F-15E and eventually the F-15EX.

The real danger is that because we've delayed these decisions, these experienced maintainers, and pilots, they go somewhere else, right? They just don't have the certainty of knowing that there's going to be a follow-on mission.

Will you work with my office and the folks that are responsible for these decisions we just have to start making these decisions more decisively and timely. I think that Whiteman stands right in the front of that line.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Sure, I will. But, you know, I want to make sure I bring the Air Force leadership ?

Senator SCHMITT. Absolutely.

Lieutenant General CAINE.—into that conversation as well. I've got very little throw weight on those decisions.

Senator SCHMITT. No, I know. But you're going to be in an important spot.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Senator SCHMITT. I think, sir, recognizing strategically that this is important and we've had conversations with the Air Force about this ?——

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir.

Senator SCHMITT.—As well. I guess with the last remaining seconds I have. Just sort of your view of this great powers? competition with China. What are some things that we need to get better at? What are some things that we need to do to prepare for the end as we shift and pivot to Asia so many people have talked about of the Pacific?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Sir, that's with deep respect for the question. That's a pretty big question.

Senator SCHMITT. What is the most important thing? The one thing?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Probably taking advantage of the time that we have. As I mentioned earlier in my testimony, making sure that we're moving with the speed, precision, sense of urgency to get the kit that we need. The challenges range from contested logistics, to long range fires, to command and control. So, it's a much deeper conversation.

Senator SCHMITT. Thank you. Look forward to working with you. Congratulations.

Chairman WICKER. Well, will you supplement that on the record then, General, because it was a very intricate question that was sprung on you with 10 seconds to go.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir, and you want me to do that now, I assume?

Chairman WICKER. No. Just take it for the record.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, sir. Got it. Thank you very much. I'm getting some signals from behind you.

Chairman WICKER. All right. And Senator Kelly.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm going to followup on Senator Schmitt's question in my second part, if I have time, because I think that is the big question of the day; how do we handle the challenges we'll face in the Western Pacific.

General Caine, first of all, congratulations on your nomination. It's a very important role. First, I want to talk a little bit about General Milley. So, as a career military officer, lifelong public servant who served in this role as Chairman under President Trump and President Biden, he's now facing an investigation by this Administration and possible demotion. This is allegedly because he, in coordination with the then Secretary of Defense, Mark Esper, made phone calls to Chinese military officials to reassure them that the United States was not going to launch an attack preventing unnecessary conflict.

General Milley did this out of a deep respect and commitment to the Constitution of the United States, in my view. I asked about this in my office when we met privately, but I want to ask, in this public setting, if you are confirmed and sworn into this position, to whom or what do you swear an oath to?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I as I have for 34 years, it's to the Constitution.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, and setting aside the specifics of this scenario, if necessary, will you choose the right thing to do, even if it's hard over the easier, wrong option?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I've always strived to do the right thing, and that's not going to change now.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, General. And are you willing to get fired from this job for doing the right thing and following the Constitution?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I am.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, General. So, back to what Senator Schmitt was getting at, a part of what he wanted to discuss. So, I want to gears here and go back to INDOPACOM force projection, repositioning of forces and resource requirements. I think you mentioned TRANSCOM. They play a pivotal role in projecting forces from the United States into INDOPACOM.

That's why I'm reintroducing the SHIPS for America Act, which is a bipartisan bill aimed at strengthening our commercial shipping base, which would have the added benefit of giving our combatant commander's additional capability so we can rapidly respond in crisis and in conflict.

If confirmed, what will you recommend to the Secretary of Defense and the President to ensure our industrial ship belt building base from forging supply chains and production are ready for competition in crisis?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I'm not in the job yet and I'm, I'm not back in the service yet, but if confirmed, I'd like to take that one for study and come back to you.

Senator KELLY. It's a logistical problem. 5,000 miles of ocean. The Chinese, if we wind up in a conflict in the Western Pacific,

they've got to go just hundreds of miles to resupply their forces. So, I appreciate you being willing to take a look at it.

One last topic. I want to talk about efforts across the Department to modernize our acquisition process. This is a topic that I'm focused on as the co-chair of the Defense Modernization Caucus. Our system is too slow, it's too unwieldy, and it can't modernize currently at the pace of China. We currently cannot match them on how fast we can innovate.

So, we need to foster an ecosystem change that encourages some risk from small businesses so they can innovate faster and ensures that if a technology meets a current demand signal, we have an effective mechanism to bridge the testing and evaluation gap that often exists to get that stuff over to production.

So, General, if confirmed, what changes will you recommend to the Secretary and the President to ensure that we take advantage of smaller, innovative companies, and acquire at the speed that technology is moving forward?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, it's we've got to have everyone weighing in small businesses, new entrants, and even the primes. The ability to bring advanced technologies from new companies, startups into the joint force and make it easier for them to bring their products and services into the military is something that I'm passionate about. Given my background and experience, if confirmed, I think that that'll be an area where I spend some time on. I know I'm out of time.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman WICKER. Thank you very much. Senator Banks

Senator BANKS. General Caine, congratulations on your nomination, and thank you for being willing to come out of retirement and serve your country in this most significant way. I look forward to having a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs whose only focus is national security, but you have a hard road ahead of you.

As you and I discussed before, General Milley modeled inappropriate and political behavior to a whole generation of officers. It's why I fully support President Trump's decision to relieve General CQ Brown and the unconventional decision to go beyond the usual four-star choices and pick an outsider like you for this most important role.

You spent much of your military career outside of

Washington, DC not exclusively inside of the Pentagon. Because of this, you have a much better understanding of what's important to our warfighters and to the average American. You also know that the National Guard often gets the short end of the stick and the budget fights, and having a chairman who properly appreciates the importance of the guard is critical. So, because of all of that, I can't wait to get you confirmed as soon as possible.

I want to go back and talk for a moment. As I said before, General Milley was the most political Chairman of the Joint Chiefs that I believe that we've ever had. He actively undermined his commander-in-chief. General Milley admitted to calling Speaker Pelosi and disparaging President Trump's mental fitness and questioning his nuclear command authority. That was completely inappropriate and unacceptable. General Caine, I want to ask you, how will you communicate differently than that with congressional leadership?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I'm committed to open and transparent communication, but the first duty of the chairman is the advisor to the President. So, you know, I would flow through that chain of command, while providing always options to the President.

Senator BANKS. General Milley admitted that under his watch, the Pentagon wasted nearly 6-million-man hours on DEI and woke trainings. Milley also testified to me before the House Armed Services Committee that he wanted to read more about critical race theory and understand white rage. Under your leadership, General Caine, what kind of training can we expect our servicemembers to be focused on?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Warfighting, lethality, and readiness?

Senator BANKS. General Milley was also the chairman during the disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal, and as a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, this is very personal to me. Under his watch, there was no accountability at all for the deaths of American heroes at Abbey Gate, no accountability for the chaos at the Kabul Airport, and no accountability for leaving Americans behind when military failure and incompetence result in the death of U.S. troops. Do you agree that the officers in charge must be held accountable?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Well, Senator, I appreciate the question. You know, the Afghanistan withdrawal was not anything anybody would've wanted. It was very difficult circumstances, and the officers on the ground had very little to do with the policies that they were directed to follow. We all mourned the 13 lost at Abbey Gate. Those officers, I'm sure did the best in a situation that was not of their making. Certainly, accountability is an important tenant in the United States, but I hope that we consider the fact that those officers were just doing the duties that they were assigned to do.

Senator BANKS. You do agree, though, accountability matters?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do.

Senator BANKS. We should always learn from our mistakes and hold those——

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, Senator.

Senator BANKS.—accountable who made those mistakes? General Milley told his aides that President Trump was preaching, 'the gospel of the furher.' I asked General C.Q. Brown last year before the House Armed Services Committee, if that was inappropriate. Even General CQ Brown agreed publicly, under oath before that committee, that that was a very inappropriate statement by General Milley. Do you agree with General Brown that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs should never disparage the commander-in-chief, the President of the United States of America?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, Senator.

Senator BANKS. When he was Chairman, General Milley testified that he, 'does interviews regularly with print media, books, documentaries, video, on TV because it is a part of a senior official's job. Milley also said he talked to the media 2, 3, 4 times a week. Do you think that's an appropriate use of the chairman's job,

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, if confirmed, I'll spend my time focused on the essential tasks in front of me.

Senator BANKS. My last question. General Milley promised Chinese generals without the President's knowledge that he'd warn them if the United States was about to attack. Do you think it's inappropriate, were appropriate for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to warn our greatest adversary when we're about to attack or what we might do?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No, sir.

Senator BANKS. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you. I guess that does it, no, Senator Slotkin. Thank you. You're recognized.

Senator SLOTKIN. Thank you, Chairman.

I apologize for being late. I just got off a plane. We've had some weather issues and some followup weather issues. I apologize. Congratulations. Happy to see you here. You're almost done. I'm between you and being done. So, I'm aware of that. I just wanted to make sure we all are on the same page.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 is what established in law that the chairman is the principal, military advisor to the President, also to the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council. It mandates that you provide strategic direction to the Armed Forces, oversee strategic planning program recommendations, budget proposals. It gives you a very big purview. I think the President Trump even issued a memorandum on Inauguration Day that the chairman be a part of the National Security Council meetings at the highest level in the White House.

That's an extremely important role, especially now. We've talked—I've heard that other members talked about the fact that there was no joint chief representative in this Signal chain about military operations, imminent military operations. I want you in those rooms giving your best military advice to anyone. I was keenly aware that all the decisionmakers on that chain were all political appointees. There was not a single person there that was there just as a representative, as a military officer. There was no COCOM Commander. There was nothing, and that I don't think missed anybody's notice.

Will you, if confirmed, make a point to get into the rooms where military operations are being discussed, planned at the strategic level, and when advice to the President is being given about the confidence in those military plans, will you push to be in that room?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, ma'am.

Senator SLOTKIN. Good. We want you there. You know, I've asked a number of folks who have come up here, very similar questions and former people who have sat in that chair about the importance that I put in swearing an oath to the Constitution of the United States. Not to any one President not to any political leader. You will swear an oath. You've done it many times before. This is not uncommon for you in your extensive experience.

I have asked all of these appointees or these nominees to say, if the President asked you to do something that was unconstitutional, to use the military in a way that was unconstitutional to put military into the streets of our cities or policing and performing law enforcement roles, which they are not trained for, et cetera, et cetera.

If he asks you to do that, will you push back and lay down the law on behalf of the Constitution, not for the President's whims?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I will, Senator. I don't expect that to happen, but of course I would.

Senator SLOTKIN. Well, we don't expect it to happen, but it did happen under the Trump administration. The first time Secretary Esper was asked to bring in the 82d Airborne Active Duty military troops to put down a peaceful protest in Washington, DC, and in his own book, he wrote that he convinced President Trump in the dark of night not to do that.

I don't need it to be public. I don't need you to have a public fight with President Trump. I'm not asking that. I'm asking in the same exact situation, would you act honorably in the same way and protect the rules and the of the road for the U.S. military to protect the institution you've given your life for and make sure that this country doesn't see their uniform military as a political arm of any one party. Will you stand up and push back similarly to Secretary Esper?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I think that's the duty and job that I have.

Senator SLOTKIN. Yes. Well, I appreciate that. I think there's lots of other important work. We all want you to be focused on the warfighter. Can you confirm for me, though, because these reports that keep coming out of Department of Defense and uniform military press outlets taking down Jackie Robinson's page on and his service to the country, the Tuskegee Airmen, which have such a connection to Detroit, Michigan. They're taken down, they're putting back up. Can you confirm that war heroes, no matter what their color, should be recognized by the Department of Defense, and it's not some DEI thing to recognize warriors of color.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Ma'am, I think we should always recognize warriors. Period.

Senator SLOTKIN. Okay. Well, I hope you uphold that as this ridiculousness continues of taking people and erasing them from our military history. It's really, to me, offensive. But we look forward to you standing up for those good values. Thank you for your work, and I yield back.

Chairman WICKER. Thank you, Senator, and this concludes today's hearing. I want to thank our distinguished witness for his testimony. And without anything further, we are indeed adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:08 p.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Prepared questions submitted to Lieutenant General John D. Caine, USAF (retired) by Chairman Wicker prior to the hearing with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Question. Section 151 of title 10, U.S. Code, provides that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal military adviser to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the President and the Secretary of Defense, section 153 of title 10 further assigns the Chairman responsibility for assisting the President and the Secretary in providing for the strategic direction of

the Armed Forces; strategic and contingency planning; global military integration; comprehensive joint readiness; joint capability development; and joint force development activities, among other matters.

Answer. Given the responsibilities of the Chairman, as enumerated in law, what background, experience, and expertise do you possess that qualify you to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Question. In my 34 years of military service, I have led warfighters in a variety of roles across the Joint Force, Total Force, and Interagency. These experiences have ranged from flying an F-16 in combat overseas and over Washington, DC on September 11th, 2001, to helping coordinate our response to Hurricane Katrina while at the Department of Agriculture, to serving alongside our Special Operations warriors in combat.

Answer. My years in the National Guard make me uniquely aware of the challenges faced by our citizen-soldiers. I also may be the only officer ever nominated for this position with experience in the venture capital world, an experience I will draw on as the DOD looks to modernize its business systems and revitalize America's Defense Industrial Base.

Finally, in my last role as Associate Director for Military Affairs at the CIA, I built a global perspective on the challenges America faces in achieving effective deterrence against our adversaries. Each of these experiences have prepared me for the humbling responsibility of serving as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at this crucial time in our Nation's history.

Question. Do you believe there is any action that you need to take to enhance your ability to exercise the responsibilities of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Answer. I do not have any recommendations at present. If confirmed, I will be attuned to any possible actions necessary to exercise the responsibilities of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In matters requiring global military strategic and operational integration, the Chairman is responsible for providing advice to the President and Secretary of Defense on ongoing military operations and advising the Secretary on the allocation and transfer of forces among geographic and functional Combatant Commands, as may be necessary, to address transregional, multi-domain, and multifunctional threats.

Question. If confirmed, how would you execute these advisory functions, while ensuring that your role does not invoke command authority or infringe on the responsibilities of the Combatant Commanders?

Answer. I understand the advisory functions of the Chairman and the command authorities and responsibilities of the Combatant Commanders.

If confirmed, I would perform the roles and functions of the Chairman consistent with all laws and policies, while maintaining awareness and knowledge of issues within and across Combatant Command areas of responsibility.

Question. If confirmed, how would you structure your relationship with the Combatant Commanders to carry out these responsibilities?

Answer. I am grateful that, during my last assignment as the Associate Director for Military Affairs, I had regular interaction with all United States Combatant Commanders and I have close relationships with each. If confirmed I look forward to working with each of them and my relationship with the Combatant Commanders will be structured according to the existing mechanisms and procedures specified in law and policy.

Question. If confirmed, what innovative ideas would you consider providing to the Secretary of Defense regarding the organization and operation of the Joint Staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I intend to look more closely at the Joint Staff's use of advanced tech tools (AI/ML) to improve efficiencies and make recommendations for the prioritization and allocation of forces to the Secretary.

Question. To the extent the Joint Staff performs functions that overlap with those of other DOD components—particularly with regard to regional or functional topics—what would be your approach, if confirmed, to consolidating and reducing those redundancies?

Answer. If confirmed, my approach to this topic would be based on thoroughly examining the details and history of related functions and processes prior to making any recommendations.

Question. Section 163(a) of title 10 provides that the President may assign duties to the Chairman to assist the President and the Secretary of Defense in exercising their command function.

In your view, are there other roles or responsibilities that should be assigned to the Chairman, to better enable the Chairman's assistance to the President and the Secretary of Defense in their exercise of command functions?

Answer. At this time, I believe the roles and responsibilities currently assigned to the Chairman are sufficient. I do not have recommendations for any additional roles and responsibilities.

If confirmed, I will consult with the Secretary and with Congress should I conclude there are additional roles or responsibilities that should be considered.

MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Question. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges you would face if confirmed as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Answer. The President directed the Joint Force to achieve Peace through Strength and defend our Homeland.

The President made clear that this begins with securing our own borders. The Joint Force is moving out alongside our Interagency partners to achieve this objective, but significant challenges remain to achieve lasting security of America's borders.

Additionally, the threat posed by China to American interests in the Indo-Pacific is real and growing. The U.S. needs to work with Allies and Partners to deter China's aggression in this region.

Unfortunately, at this critical moment, the Joint Force is contending with an acquisition process and Defense Industrial Base that are not optimized for protracted conflict. The U.S. does not have the throughput, responsiveness, or agility needed to deter our adversaries.

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

Answer. Given the global set of challenges before the United States the Joint Force must enhance the integration of options with the Services, the Interagency, our Allies and Partners and the Private Sector. The U.S. cannot miss a single opportunity to integrate fully our mutual efforts to provide the greatest return on those investments.

If confirmed, I will focus on working with the Secretary of Defense and Congress to implement recommendations made by recent congressional commissions on PPBE, Acquisition Reform, and Strategic Posture. I will also review the Joint Staff's recommendations on reforming the requirements process as directed by the Fiscal Year 2024 NDAA. We know what the problems are and how to solve them, we just need to focus on implementing the solutions.

I strongly believe in the primacy of people. The Joint Force needs the talent found in America's sons and daughters to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The warrior ethos, meritocracy, and clear standards will attract this talent, and I will work with the Services and the Department to strengthen recruiting.

CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY

Question. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to ensure that your tenure as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff epitomizes the fundamental requirement for civilian control of the Armed Forces embedded in the U.S. Constitution and other laws?

Answer. For my 34 years of service, I have been fully committed to the laws, policies, and norms of civilian control of the military. It is a fundamental pillar of our Armed Services.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will stress to my Staff in the J3 and J5 the need for a close and trusting relationship with OUSD/P as both Staffs prepare plans.

Question. If confirmed, what specific actions would you take to ensure that the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness are fully engaged in evaluating and reporting on the readiness of DOD components, and if necessary, in mitigating readiness gaps and shortfalls?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the relationship and practice of frequent coordination and collaboration on readiness issues between Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Joint Staff, ensuring we are fully engaged in evaluating and reporting the readiness of DOD components. OSD and the Joint Staff share a statutorily mandated title 10 sec 482 readiness reports with each other before submitting to Congress, and each host high level reviews and discussions at Deputies Management Action Group (DMAGs) and JCS Readiness Tanks semi-annually. The statutory functions of the CJCS require joint planning sessions to align priorities and strategies for mitigating readiness issues, while also advocating for necessary resources and funding to address identified gaps.

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

Answer. Per Article 1, the Congress is charged to raise our Army and Navy and, therefore a key constituent in the totality of our National Defense. If confirmed, I intend to have a strong, trusting, bipartisan relationship with the Congress.

Question. As a military officer, you take an oath to support and defend the Constitution. How do you balance this obligation with the responsibility to provide your best military advice to civilian leadership, even when that advice may differ from civilian political priorities?

Answer. If confirmed, in accordance with my oath to support and defend the constitution, I will provide military advice to the chain of command, identifying options in support of national policy and security. The advice would be focused on overall strategy, risk, readiness and resourcing considerations to best enable decisions from the Nation's civilian leadership. As I always have for 34 years, I will always speak truth to power.

If confirmed as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, you will testify regularly before Congress and may be asked to comment on partisan political matters.

Question. What is your view of your responsibility to provide your best military advice to Congress while also ensuring that you and your office remain apolitical, recognizing that you serve as a model for other senior uniformed officers and the entire Armed Forces?

Answer. If confirmed as Chairman, I will meet my responsibilities to advise the President and Secretary and consult with Congress. My best military advice will remain non-partisan and apolitical.

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Question. Section 151 of title 10, U.S. Code, codifies the role of the Joint Chiefs as military advisors to the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.

If confirmed, would you commit to provide your best military advice to the President, the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council, even when your advice and opinions might differ from those of other members of the Cabinet, the President's other senior advisors, or from the President's own views?

Answer. I will.

Question. If confirmed, would you commit to provide your best military advice to the Secretary of Defense, even when your advice and opinions might differ from those of other DOD senior officials, or from the Secretary's own views?

Answer. I will.

Question. If confirmed, how would you elicit from the individual Service Chiefs, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and the Combatant Commanders, their best military advice, including advice and opinions that may diverge your own?

Answer. If confirmed, I would elicit military analysis and advice from the Joint Force, to include other Service Chiefs, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and Combatant Commanders. The Unified Command Plan directs communications between the President, or the Secretary and the Combatant Commanders be transmitted through the CJCS unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary. As the global integrator, I will have mechanisms in place to elicit this advice and communications from all Combatant Commanders and pass them through the appropriate channels along with my own advice.

Question. What is your assessment of the size and effectiveness of the Joint Staff?

Answer. I have not yet had the opportunity to observe and assess the Joint Staff's size and effectiveness. If confirmed, I will conduct a thorough assessment before deciding to recommend any changes to the Secretary of Defense, the President, and Congress. In my past experience, they are the most professional staff in the world.

ROLE OF DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INSPECTOR GENERAL

Question. The Inspector General Act of 1978 requires that Inspectors General of Federal departments "be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, without regard to political affiliation and solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations" in order to "conduct and supervise audits and investigations relating to the programs and operations of" the Department of Defense.

What is your view of the necessity of the Department of Defense Inspector General to conduct and supervise audits and investigations relating to the programs and operations of the Department in an independent, objective, and apolitical manner?

Answer. The necessity of the Department of Defense Inspector General (DoD IG) conducting and supervising audits and investigations in an independent, objective, and apolitical manner is crucial for ensuring the integrity, accountability, and effectiveness of DOD programs and operations.

The DOD IG is necessary for combating waste, fraud, and abuse, promoting economy, efficiency, and effectiveness on government programs and operations by identifying and recommending corrective actions.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to respecting the independence of the DOD Inspector General, subject only to the requirements and limitations contained in the Inspector General Act of 1978?

Answer. Yes.

ROLE OF JUDGE ADVOCATES GENERAL

Question. Federal law states that no officer or employee of the Department of Defense may interfere with the ability of the Judge Advocate General of a military service to give independent legal advice to their chief of service, or interfere with the ability of judge advocates of the military services assigned or attached to, or performing duty with, military units to give independent legal advice to commanders.

What is your view of the propriety of and need for uniformed military lawyers to exercise their independent legal and professional judgment when providing legal advice to military commanders, military service leadership, and Department of Defense leadership?

Answer. I absolutely value the independence and professionalism of uniformed military lawyers to provide legal advice to military commanders, military service leadership, and Department of Defense leadership. I have relied on JAGs throughout my career to provide candid and independent legal advice on the broad range of legal issues involved in military operations and activities. I will continue to do so.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to respecting the independence of uniformed military attorneys to provide their best legal advice free from inappropriate influence and reprisal?

Answer. I commit to respecting the independence of uniformed military attorneys to provide their best legal advice free from inappropriate influence and reprisal. I have done so throughout my career and, if confirmed, will do so as Chairman.

STRATEGIC GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Question. If confirmed as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, specifically what would be your role in generating and shaping the content of, and improving DOD component compliance with, each such document?

National Security Strategy

Answer. If confirmed, as the senior military advisor to the President and the Secretary of Defense, I will advise both on the Joint Force capabilities necessary to deter aggression and implement the President's national security priorities. I will advise on ability, options, and risk to execute the strategic direction given to the military in the National Security Strategy (NSS) and work closely with the Secretary of Defense to implement it.

Question. National Defense Strategy

Answer. I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense to provide advice and assistance on the military ways, means, and options for implementing the Secretary's defense priorities. I will focus particular attention on the threats and opportunities we face in the strategic environment; the military roles, missions, posture, and capabilities necessary to defend U.S. interests; and determine the investments necessary to protect and simultaneously defend the U.S. Homeland and deter or defeat adversaries that work against our Nation's interests and security. I will ensure the Joint Staff is collaborative and responsive to the Secretary of Defense's staff to ensure they have everything they need to develop a strategy that achieves peace through strength.

Question. National Military Strategy

Answer. Title 10, § 153 directs the NMS to support the objectives of the United States as articulated by the President and Secretary of Defense through national security and defense guidance, direction, and strategies. If confirmed as Chairman, I will lead the NMS development to support the President's objectives to achieve peace through strength and the Secretary of Defense's priorities. If confirmed, I will develop an NMS that is integrated with the National Defense Strategy. Together,

we can ensure the Joint Force has a clear understanding of the country's strategic defense priorities over the near-and long-term to defend America's interests. I will work closely with the Services and Combatant Commands (CCMDs) to provide a strategy that includes clear military options to the Secretary of Defense and the President. If confirmed, I will provide my military advice on implementation of the NMS, assess progress and risk, and adjust when necessary and as directed.

Question. Chairman's Risk Assessment

Answer. Title 10, § 153 directs the Chairman to prepare an annual assessment that identifies and defines the military strategic risks to United States interests and military risks to the execution of the NMS. The Chairman's Risk Assessment (CRA) is developed in collaboration with the Services and CCMDs, with the final approval and discretion of the Chairman, using a common methodology to appraise and communicate risk. If confirmed, I will continue to use the CRA as my recommendation to the Secretary of Defense, and ultimately Congress, on risks to U.S. security interests and executing the NMS to inform resourcing and capability development decisions in the Department.

Question. Contingency Planning Guidance

Answer. The Chairman directs the implementation of the Contingency Planning Guidance (CPG) and integrates contingency planning across Combatant Commands for each of the National Defense Strategy key threats. The Chairman uses the guidance in the CPG in the development of the Joint Strategic Campaign Plan (JSCP). Additionally, the Chairman provides guidance for preparing and reviewing contingency plans that conform to policy guidance from the President and Secretary of Defense. Last, the Chairman ensures that plans are feasible, suitable, acceptable, and complete for presentation to the Secretary. If confirmed, I will continue directing the implementation of the CPG and its use in the development of the JSCP.

Question. Defense Planning Guidance

Answer. The Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) establishes the Secretary of Defense's strategic resource priorities. If confirmed, as the Chairman I would produce the Chairman's Program Recommendation (CPR) which directly informs the DPG. I would consider a multitude of assessments to include the annual Capability Gap Assessment, Chairman's Risk Assessment, and others to ensure the Joint Force aligns means to ends and ways, in light of risk.

Question. Joint Strategic Campaign Plan

Answer. The Joint Strategic Campaign Plan (JSCP) enables the execution of the Chairman's statutory responsibilities for strategic and contingency planning, global military integration, and the Chairman's oversight prescribed in Title 10, U.S. Code, Sections 153, 163, and 113. If confirmed, I would use the JSCP to implement the President and Secretary of Defense's strategic planning guidance by providing direction for development of campaign and contingency plans that advance strategic objectives, priorities, and tasks.

Question. Global Force Management Implementation Guidance

Answer. The Global Force Management Implementation Guidance (GFMIG) enables the Secretary of Defense to integrate complementary policy and guidance on directed readiness, assignment, allocation, apportionment, and assessment into a single authoritative document. If confirmed, my role is to advise the Secretary of Defense on matters of readiness and requirements of the CCMDs to achieve U.S. defense objectives. Additionally, I would advise the Secretary of Defense on matters of risk related to allocation and assignment of forces to better support resource-informed planning and enable the force to be dynamically employed.

Question. Will you commit that, if confirmed, you would undertake all necessary action to ensure that each of these strategic guidance documents is timely generated and issued, and updated, as necessary to reflect changes in assumptions, policy, or other factors?

Answer. Yes.

USE OF MILITARY FORCE

Question. In your view, what is the appropriate role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in establishing policies for the use of military force and the rules of engagement?

Answer. The President, as Commander-in-Chief, determines when to use military force. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are advisors to the President and the Secretary of Defense and should actively advise on the policies for the use of military force and the rules of engagement.

Question. If confirmed, what factors would you consider in making recommendations to the President and the Secretary of Defense on the use of military force?

Answer. The use of military force must always be carefully considered. If confirmed, my recommendations to the President and Secretary of Defense on the use

of military force will be consistent with U.S. domestic and international law. Additionally, I would consider probability of success, cost in terms of casualties, and strategic risk.

Question. What factors would you consider, if confirmed, in recommending to the Secretary of Defense which forces of other nations should be eligible for Collective Self-Defense by U.S. forces, and under what conditions?

Answer. When “collective self-defense” rules of engagement are authorized, U.S. forces may defend foreign forces against any attack or threat of imminent attack. The key factors I would consider in a recommendation to the Secretary of Defense would be if it is legal to do so, and if it is in U.S. interests to do so.

Question. What is your understanding and assessment of the authorities and agreements in place to permit U.S. military personnel to carry out missions under the provisions of title 50, U.S. Code? If confirmed, how would you modify these agreements or authorities, if at all?

Answer. I understand that relevant authorities and agreements provide the necessary framework for military forces to support activities of other U.S. Government departments and agencies when called upon by the President or Secretary of Defense as the situation dictates. I believe that the current authorities and agreements are sufficient. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing work within the Department and with colleagues in other U.S. Government departments and agencies to adjust existing arrangements as the need arises.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

Question. In your view, what are the primary challenges for the combatant commands in mitigating, investigating, and responding to allegations of civilian casualties resulting from U.S. military operations?

Answer. The primary challenges combatant commands face is timely access to evidence and the ability to share evidence with our allies, our partners, and non-governmental organizations. These challenges are due to restrictive data sharing policies with each of these entities, which slows the assessment and response process. This results in decreased integration, analysis, and dissemination of civilian casualty information and effects.

Question. What is your understanding of the implementation status of the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP) and what additional actions do you believe should be taken to enable the Department of Defense to effectively and credibly mitigate, investigate, and respond to allegations of civilian casualties resulting from U.S. military operations?

Answer. The Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan, or CHMR-AP, is in its fourth and final year of implementation. A workforce is in place, doctrine has been updated, and education and training are ongoing. I understand the combatant commands see positive impacts from the program. As with any new program, there comes a time to pause and reflect, listen to feedback, and assess the future path. That is where we are today. It is appropriate to look at the resources, the distribution of those resources, and the changing world environment to determine the best course of action moving forward.

JOINT OPERATIONS

Question. The Goldwater Nichols Act enabled an unprecedented degree of jointness within the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Combatant Commanders. Today, both the DOD and Congress recognize the need for a deeper level of integration and interoperability to overcome anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) networks and to deter and defeat large-scale aggression.

What do you perceive to be the role and capability requirements for close combat formations in future joint force operations?

Answer. Service led joint and coalition experimentation events are improving interoperability and identifying critical gaps.

Question. What is the Joint Staff's appropriate role in experimentation?

Answer. There are two main experimentation roles in the Joint Staff. One, within the Chairman's responsibilities for Joint Force development, the Chairman formulates policies for experimentation on urgent and long-term concepts for force employment, to include analyzing prioritized gaps in capabilities. Two, within the Chairman's responsibilities for joint capability development, the Joint Staff works to recommend new joint military capabilities that maintain technological and operational superiority of the Joint Force based on advances of new technology and new joint concepts. To do this, the Chairman leverages convening power, Joint Experimentation Guidance, the Warfighter Lab Incentive Fund, and other tools to catalyze a campaign approach to joint experimentation that promises progress in addressing

specific problems, gaps, and critical capabilities identified in the Joint Warfighting Concept. The Chairman also uses the learning from this campaign to make annual program recommendations to the Secretary of Defense.

Question. How would you ensure the Joint Staff is appropriately facilitating joint experimentation during the capabilities development process?

Answer. I would publish specific Joint Experimentation Guidance and continue to integrate and synchronize Joint Force experimentation not only across the Department of Defense and with Allies and Partners, but also with Interagency Partners.

Question. What role do you foresee playing in influencing joint and enabling capabilities development that will link or knit together service-specific capabilities, such as Joint All Domain Command and Control (JADC2) or contested logistics?

Answer. The Chairman's title 10 authorities for joint capability development are exercised through the Joint Requirements Oversight Council. The JROC plays a critical role in developing a globally integrated and interoperable joint force, without which the DOD risks stove-piped, Service-specific capabilities. This function is particularly critical with key capability areas such as JADC2 or contested logistics, which are inherently joint, multi-domain, and multi-theater.

JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS AND COMPONENT COMMANDS

Question. Is the current model for creating joint force headquarters below the unified command level appropriate and adequate to meet the challenges articulated in the 2022 National Defense Strategy? In your view, are there other models you have seen that we should be considering?

Answer. While the existing framework for establishing Joint Force headquarters beneath the unified command level is suitable and sufficient, if confirmed, I will be committed to exploring alternative models. This review will encompass an examination of various Joint Force headquarters structures to ensure the Joint Force is optimally postured to address the challenges outlined in the 2022 National Defense Strategy.

Question. Given the time required to stand up, man, and train joint force headquarters, and the short warning time that is expected before a potential conflict in certain areas of operation, would Combatant Commanders' operations and contingency planning and preparedness be improved by creating and exercising subordinate joint force headquarters during the competition phase?

Answer. Proactively establishing subordinate Joint Force headquarters before a crisis erupts could indeed enhance operational readiness, planning, and preparedness. However, this must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. A thorough analysis is crucial to determine when the benefits of early establishment outweigh the potential costs, including manpower allocation, staff workload, and financial implications across the Joint Force. If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Combatant Commanders and Joint Chiefs to carefully evaluate this approach.

Question. The Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) required the Secretary of Defense to establish a standing joint force headquarters (JFHQ) in the INDOPACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). What is your view on the need for a JFHQ in this AOR?

Answer. The Indo-Pacific region is a top priority for a United States military, with China presenting a significant and evolving challenge. As such, the ability to respond effectively to crises in the region, using the Joint Force with all its combined capabilities, is paramount.

While the 2023 NDAA mandates a standing Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ) in the INDOPACOM AOR, the current approach provides a strong foundation for responding to potential crises.

Admiral Paparo has stated that, in a Joint Operations Area (JOA) within the Theater of War, the U.S. Pacific Fleet would serve as the Joint Task Force (JTF), a capability for which they were certified in 2023.

The existing structure, which leverages the proven capabilities of service components and their ability to function as JTFs, provides the necessary flexibility and responsiveness to address a wide range of potential crises within the INDOPACOM AO, and meets the intent of the NDAA to ensure optimal C2 for winning any conflict in the region.

Question. What are the most significant obstacles to establishing and exercising such joint force headquarters in advance of a crisis, and what could be done to overcome those obstacles, in your view?

Answer. One of the primary challenges in prematurely establishing Joint Force headquarters lies in the potential strain on resources. Combatant Commanders currently possess sufficient staffing to manage daily operations and pre-crisis scenarios. Creating additional headquarters prematurely could divert critical resources from

other ongoing global missions. Therefore, if confirmed, I will work with the Combatant Commanders and Joint Chiefs of Staff to assess each unique situation in advance of a crisis on its resources in order to best posture the joint force for success.

Question. What new technical capabilities, processes, or concepts of employment do you think would be needed to improve our ability to achieve high levels of readiness for, and realistically exercise, such joint force headquarters prior to a crisis, or to rapidly establish in the event of an unforeseen crisis?

Answer. The Combatant Commanders prioritize maintaining a high level of readiness when it comes to establishing Joint Force headquarters. The Joint Force conducts regular exercises and tests to ensure the ability to stand up these headquarters efficiently, even in the face of unforeseen crises.

The Joint Force remains committed to innovation, constantly evaluating emerging technologies, refining processes, and exploring new operational concepts. Regular joint exercises play a crucial role in this process, allowing the Joint Force to test and refine these advancements while informing the development of new concepts.

If confirmed, I will ensure these efforts continue and will actively seek opportunities to further enhance readiness in this critical area.

2022 NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

Question. The 2022 National Defense Strategy outlines that the United States faces a rising China, an aggressive Russia, and the continued threat from rogue regimes and global terrorism. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the National Defense Strategy 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. The PLA has made significant military improvements to include adjusting its military structures, fielding modern indigenous systems, building readiness, and strengthening its competency to conduct joint operations. Numerically, China has the largest navy in the world, with a battle force of over 370 ships and submarines, including more than 140 major surface combatants. The PLA Air Force is modernizing and indigenizing its aircraft and unmanned aerial systems rapidly, matching U.S. standards. The PLA Rocket Force and China’s hypersonic missile technologies have greatly advanced during the past 20 years. Many of China’s missile programs are comparable to other international top-tier producers. However, the PLA still has deficiencies in commander proficiency, long-distance logistics, urban warfare, and the PLA lacks modern warfare experience writ large.

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

Answer. Russia very likely remains deterred from an overt military attack against the United States or NATO; however, Moscow retains the ability and willingness to conduct asymmetric activity below what it assesses to be the threshold of military conflict. The conflict in Ukraine very likely has strained its conventional military forces, increasing Russia’s dependence on its nuclear arsenal as a means of deterrence to protect itself from perceived external military threats. Despite the near-term increase in Russia’s Defense Industrial Base, this production is unlikely sustainable over the mid-to long-term due to labor shortages, decreased weapons and equipment shortfalls, and inability to fully compensate for dual-use components they can no longer acquire due to sanctions.

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

Answer. Russia, China, Iran and the DPRK share broadly similar goals and transactionally cooperate at the bilateral—and sometimes trilateral—levels on arms sales, sanctions evasion, and limited military exercises. However, these countries are not acting as a bloc, nor are they trending toward a NATO-style alliance. Militarily, Russia likely is emboldened to continue its war in Ukraine, in part, due to munitions and soldiers provided by the DPRK, as well as armed UAVs supplied by Iran. Moscow and Pyongyang have committed to strengthening their defense capacities as part of their comprehensive strategic partnership treaty, which could expedite the DPRK’s military modernization goals. Beijing supports Moscow by purchasing oil, selling dual-use technologies such as microelectronics, and providing diplomatic cover in international fora, though it has avoided providing military aid. Though it is a partner to the DPRK and Russia, Beijing has publicly distanced itself from Moscow and Pyongyang’s growing defense cooperation, referring to it as a strictly bilateral matter. Tehran seeks to deepen its bilateral relationships with other U.S. adversaries to derive maximum diplomatic, economic, and military benefits.

Question. In your view, should the Defense Department's force sizing construct be based on the need to conduct simultaneous conflicts in Asia and Europe?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and the Combatant Commanders to review and evaluate the force sizing construct to ensure that it is focused on the most pressing requirements.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and the Combatant Commanders to review threats posed by collusion among Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. I am willing to discuss more detail in a classified setting.

Question. If confirmed, what would you do if you determine that the DOD cannot meet the demands placed on it by the 2022 National Defense Strategy?

Answer. If confirmed, I will take a disciplined approach to assess risk and the Joint Force's posture and capabilities in accordance with guidance from the Secretary and the President. I will also work closely with allies and partners to advance interoperability and burden-sharing to help decrease risk globally and strengthen ability to meet current and future defense challenges. If necessary, I would recommend re-prioritizing and re-allocating resources to focus on the most critical areas by reducing or eliminating less critical programs or initiative to free up resources for more pressing needs. I will communicate clearly and transparently with you and the Secretary of Defense, via my Chairman's Risk Assessment, about the risks, challenges, and limitations facing the Joint Force.

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

Answer. If confirmed, my recommendations will prioritize Joint Force preparation and flexibility for both global opportunities and challenges in a dynamic strategic environment. Title 10 directs the Chairman to provide advice relating to global military and strategic and operational integration. Effective global integration of the Joint Force is necessary to support defense objectives in the modern strategic environment. I will advise the Secretary of Defense to align the National Defense Strategy guidance and priorities to reflect strategic global integration and will ensure consistency with the President's national policy directives and the NSS. I will also advocate investment and use of emerging technologies. Finally, I will advance options for the Secretary that will facilitate cross coordination and integration with other departments and agencies.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BUDGET

Question. In your view, are the programs and resources required to generate the capabilities necessary to implement the 2022 National Defense Strategy properly prioritized within the Department of Defense? If confirmed, do you believe the Department needs to realign or refocus programs and funding, if at all?

Answer. The fiscal year 2025 budget request was strategy-driven and focused on executing the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I will work with the Administration to ensure future budgets have the right mix of capabilities and capacity to defend against current and future threats. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department in aligning resources to current strategy.

Question. Do you believe that 3–5 percent real budgetary growth through the FYDP is required to implement the 2022 National Defense Strategy effectively? Please explain your answer.

Answer. The fiscal year 2025 budget request was strategy-driven and focused on executing the National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I will work with the Administration to ensure future budgets have the right mix of capabilities and capacity to defend against current and future threats. If confirmed, I will continue to support the Department in aligning resources to current strategy.

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

Answer. The fiscal year 2025 budget request adequately resourced the Department to execute the 2022 National Defense Strategy. If confirmed, I will work with the Administration to ensure future budgets have the right mix of capabilities and capacity to defend against current and future threats. I will also continue to work with Congress and advocate for on-time appropriations so that we may fully capitalize on executing the Administration's strategy.

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

What are your views of this statutory requirement and the utility of unfunded priorities lists?

Answer. I recognize the critical importance of this statutory requirement in ensuring transparency and strategic alignment of defense priorities. These lists serve as essential tools in communicating to Congress the areas where additional resources could significantly enhance military readiness and capabilities. The Department relies on several tools to illuminate joint priorities and develop a budget that is aligned to the Department's strategy. While the unfunded priority lists are required by law, they are not the only tool to build a strategy-informed defense budget.

Question. If confirmed, would you commit to supporting the Service Chiefs and Combatant Commanders in providing their unfunded priorities lists to Congress in a timely manner, beginning with the fiscal year 2026 budget request?

Answer. If confirmed, I will be fully committed to supporting the Service Chiefs and Combatant Commanders in providing their unfunded priorities lists (UPLs) to Congress in a timely manner, beginning with the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget request.

JOINT OFFICER MANAGEMENT

Question. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff wields significant influence over joint officer management—the policies and procedures that guide joint officer career development and the attainment of joint experience and education. The NDAA for fiscal year 2017 modified the Joint Qualified Officer (JQO) system established by the Goldwater-Nichols Act in two significant ways. First, it broadened the statutory definition of “joint matters” to expand the types of positions for which an officer can receive joint duty credit. Further, it reduced from 3 years to two the minimum tour length required for joint duty credit.

What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the fiscal year 2017 modifications to the JQO system?

Answer. The two significant modifications have provided the Department additional flexibility in the Joint Qualification System. The expansion of the “joint matters” definition has ensured the ability to award joint duty credit to additional officers making contributions to the development and achievement of strategic objectives. The reduced statutory tour length required (From 36 Months to 24 Months) for joint duty credit has provided the Services additional flexibility in officer assignment for tightly managed career timelines and milestones.

Question. In your view, are the requirements associated with becoming a JQO, and the link between attaining joint qualification and eligibility for promotion to General/Flag (G/FO) officer rank, consistent with the operational and professional demands of Service line officers?

Answer. Yes. Although careers are managed according to Service specific milestones and operational demands, the 24-month minimum joint tour and associated JPME completion for joint qualification are sensible and greatly enhance an officer's perspective and knowledge to perform at the GO/FO ranks.

Question. In your view, what additional modifications to the JQO system are necessary to ensure that military officers are able to attain both meaningful joint and Service-specific leadership experience, and adequate professional development?

Answer. The existing joint officer qualification requirements provide a tested and flexible means to ensure officers develop the skills necessary for successful service at the operational and strategic levels; therefore, no additional modification to the JQO system is necessary at this time.

Question. What are your ideas for improving the JQO system better to meet the needs of Reserve component officers?

Answer. Major changes to the JQO system were made in 2007 to incorporate Reserve component officers and the Reserve policy was adjusted in 2018 to increase joint qualification opportunities for Reserve component officers. I do not currently recommend changing the JQO system with respect to the Reserve component, but we must continue to explore areas that allow Reserve component officers to attend training while balancing their civilian job.

Question. Should the requirement to be a JQO be eliminated as a consideration in selecting officers for promotion and assignment?

Answer. No. JQO requirements enhance the ability of General/Flag officers to operate effectively in the joint environment at the operational and strategic level. Offi-

cers who meet the requirements provide benefit to both the Services and joint organizations, and ultimately the Department as a whole.

Question. If confirmed, what modifications would you suggest to provide DOD and the Military Services the force management and talent management tools necessary to recruit, develop, sustain, and retain a 21st century, joint, All-Volunteer Force?

Answer. To maintain the competitive edge and strengthen the lethality of the All-Volunteer Force, I will collaborate with OSD and the Service Chiefs to enhance force and talent management strategies. This involves leveraging advanced technologies like AI for recruitment, developing targeted outreach campaigns, revising training programs to include leadership and technical skills, and expanding educational opportunities. Additionally, I will prioritize initiatives to improve the quality of life for service members, incentivize performance, and implement flexible policies aligned with executive orders, while fostering leadership accountability to effectively recruit, develop, sustain, and retain a modern, joint, All-Volunteer Force.

Question. Do you believe current DOD and Military Service procedures and practices for reviewing the records of officers pending the President's nomination for promotion or assignment are sufficient to enable fully informed decisions by the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, and the President?

Answer. Yes, the Services evaluate officer qualifications, past performance, future potential, and any available adverse or reportable information, and each service has a rigorous process in place to ensure all decisions are fully informed.

Question. In your view, are these procedures and practices fair to the individual military officers proceeding through the promotion or assignment process?

Answer. Yes. I believe these procedures and practices are fair and reasonable for the officers involved.

JOINT PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION (JPME)

Question. Based on your assessment of the threats facing the United States, now and in the future, what knowledge, skills, and abilities will officers need to succeed in great power competition against the Nation's adversaries?

Answer. The Joint Force's professional military education programs must provide an integrated approach to understanding joint warfighting and our adversaries within the context of a rapidly changing character of war, from accession to senior leader courses for general and flag officers and senior enlisted leaders. Future leaders require the knowledge and skills to prepare them for service as joint warfighting leaders, senior staff positions, and strategists who:

- Discern the military dimensions of a challenge affecting national interests, frame the issue at the policy level, and recommend viable military options within the overarching frameworks of globally integrated operations, and be able to develop strategies nested with U.S. interests.
- Anticipate and lead rapid adaptation and innovation during a dynamic period of acceleration in the rate of change in warfare, under the conditions of great power competition and disruptive technology;
- Plan and conduct joint warfighting at the operational to strategic levels, as all-domain, globally integrated operations, including the ability to integrate allied and partner contributions.
- Remain agile to develop, execute, and adapt strategy through campaigns and operations to achieve policy end states; and
- Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills, emotional intelligence, and effective written, verbal, and visual communications skills to support the development and implementation of military strategies and complex operations and communicate to senior officials and subordinates.

A number of independent reviews have found that the current JPME system insufficiently prepares future military leaders to operate in a geopolitical environment shaped by multiple nuclear-armed adversaries and lacks sufficient rigor and instruction in strategic deterrence missions.

Question. In your view, what additional steps should be taken to increase the proficiency of future senior military leaders in leading the joint force during a period of increased strategic competition, particularly in the nuclear domain?

Answer. In terms of the military's contribution to strategic competition, the Joint Force has mature doctrine on the uses and applications of military force short of war. All the JPME programs leverage this doctrine as part of their curriculum and instruction.

- The war colleges have existing programs on deterrence, to include coursework on coercion theory. As such, strategic deterrence is an enduring special area of interest as assessed by Joint Staff J-7 for the Chairman.

- Every year, the Joint Staff J-7 in coordination with Marine Corps University sponsors a Faculty Development Seminar for instructors from all the DOD's JPME programs. This year's agenda will focus on contemporary nuclear operations and the latest thinking surrounding strategic deterrence and experts from across the DOD will present the instruction.
- Additionally, the Joint Staff will nominate a special area of emphasis on nuclear operations and combat operations in a nuclear environment. Every officer enrolled in a JPME program will benefit from this expanded instruction.

Question. In your view, are there opportunities in JPME to improve STEM cognizance and cyber fluency across the joint force to ensure that leaders understand and can effectively employ technologies to fight and win our Nation's wars?

Answer. Understanding and anticipating emerging technologies and applications of cyber capabilities are important skills to be taught at all levels of professional military education. STEM is the hallmark of several military educational institutions including all the Service Academies and graduate schools such as Naval Post Graduate School and Air Force Institute of Technology. These institutions develop "deep" expertise in cyber and technology, tailored to the needs of the Joint Force. STEM aspects are balanced with joint warfighting considerations at the staff college and war college levels. Cyber and disruptive technology considerations are woven into curriculum and students are expected to demonstrate ability to consider these factors in their joint planning and operations assessments. In all, the JPME enterprise works extensively to develop both "depth and breadth" of operationally minded warfighters.

Question. In your view, is there a role for JPME in developing basic product management skills across the joint force to ensure that military leaders are proficient in the employment of software and automation in warfighting?

Answer. Future warfighters and warfighting leaders will inevitably confront both the opportunities and limitations associated with employing forces supported or enabled by software and automation. As operations and campaigns become increasingly complex, product management skills can enable and speed critical decision-making. I am committed to preparing joint warfighters to strategically employ software and automation skills and resources across all joint endeavors.

LEGAL COUNSEL TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Question. Section 156 of title 10, U.S. Code, requires the Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be selected by a board of officers convened by the Secretary of Defense. To this day, the Chairman's Legal Counsel remains the only joint duty officer selected from among qualified officers of the Armed Forces in this manner.

Do you consider the board selection process required by section 156 to be an effective and efficient process for selecting an officer to serve in this critical joint position?

Answer. Yes, I believe the selection process for the position of the Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is an effective, efficient, and equitable means to select an officer for this position from a pool of talented judge advocate leaders across the Services.

Question. Would you support expanding application of the process employed to select the Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to other joint officer positions? Why or why not?

Answer. I do not believe it is necessary to expand the LC selection process to other joint billets. The LC selection process pertains to a uniquely specific, statutorily authorized JS billet. The current, well-established processes used to select general/flag officers to other joint staff positions effectively facilitates a pool of candidates representing the best officers from each service. The JS process for identifying officers gives the Combatant Commander and the Chairman flexibility to meet operational demands and emergent requirements. The JS can select from across the Services (to include the Coast Guard) and the Active, Guard, and Reserve components to identify the individual with appropriate skills and experience. Moreover, the current process provides commanders and other senior leaders an opportunity to quickly review a slate of nominated officers and conduct interviews as necessary. The JS can alert the Services to quickly identify eligible personnel, select candidates, nominate them, and have them in position in as little as 90 days, if necessary.

ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Question. U.S. alliances and partnerships are crucial to U.S. success in competition with, deterrence of, and potential conflict against long term strategic competitors.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to collaborate with and seek ways to incorporate our highly capable and frontline Allies and partners in defense planning to maximize our global efforts against adversaries. As the President and Secretary have made clear, our allies and partners, particularly those in Europe, must increase their contributions to collective security and I look forward to carrying this message to my Chief of Defense counterparts.

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

Answer. We must continue to project unity and strength while strengthening military to military relationships with our Allies and partners. If confirmed, I will continue to collaborate with and seek ways to incorporate our highly capable and frontline Allies and partners in defense planning to maximize our global efforts against adversaries. I will continue the regular engagements with Ally and partner counterparts to understand their strategic concerns and to identify areas for increased global cooperation. Synchronization and transparency of our collective military global approaches results in greater pressure on our adversaries while also enabling increased flexibility to refocus U.S. military resources on U.S. national priorities.

In NORTHCOM, defense of the Homeland and ensuring operational control of the U.S. southern border will be my top priority. I will focus on the efforts to modernize NORAD and improve coordination with Canada to ensure our efforts are complementary. I will also continue to foster the strong mil-to-mil relationship with Mexico to confront shared challenges.

In INDOPACOM, if confirmed, I will focus on modernizing our Alliance with Japan by aligning strategic planning and priorities in a more integrated manner and deepening our Alliance with Australia through investments in posture and interoperability through the critical AUKUS security partnership, as well as expanding ongoing co-production and maintenance efforts for critical munitions, essential to building resilience into our Defense Industrial Base. The Joint Force stands to gain from the deepening strategic interests between the U.S. and India, by elevating military cooperation across multiple domains, increasing new procurements and co-production arrangements, and applying effort to streamline defense trade, technology exchange and maintenance, spare supplies and in-country repair and overhaul of U.S.-provided defense systems. If confirmed, I will continue to support our ongoing efforts to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.

In SOUTHCOM, I will take specific actions to further strengthen defense of the Homeland, including greater focus on PRC military and financial investments in the theater, specifically in Panama. I will also strengthen existing alliances and partnerships and identify new partnerships, as necessary, to further degrade PRC influence in the hemisphere.

In EUCOM, we must encourage our Allies and partners to increase their capability and capacity, and prioritize outcome driven relationships. I will continue to work alongside our NATO Allies to deter and, if necessary, defend against any threat, and build resilience against malign influence and hybrid activities.

In CENTCOM, I will prioritize cooperation with our regional partners that results in a maximum pressure campaign to deter and defend against Iranian aggression. I will build upon the existing regional security constructs to enhance Integrated Air and Missile Defense and Maritime Security to best defend U.S. personnel and vital interests in the region, support allies and partners, and deter adversaries. I will also look for new opportunities for the entire Joint Force—including our new State Partnership Program relationships with Saudi Arabia and UAE—to contribute to shared regional security priorities.

In AFRICOM, I will prioritize partner-led, U.S. enabled efforts to achieve our shared security interests in degrading terrorist organizations, strengthening multi-lateral coordination, and promoting stability with the long-term goal of our partners achieving operational independence.

In SPACECOM, I will prioritize sustained freedom of action in space, optimization of our resources, and enhancing mission assurance. We must promote norms of behavior by all space-faring nations in space which support U.S. national security, economic, scientific, and commercial interests.

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

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

Answer. Foreign military sales have the potential to strengthen the U.S. Defense Industrial Base by increasing the demand signal for manufacturers, which, if properly incentivized, can enable needed investments in capacity expansion. Some capacity limitations can be offset by co-production initiatives in cases where the business case and U.S. national security benefits align. Ultimately, by equipping partners with U.S. systems, the U.S. increases interoperability and set the stage for more seamless coalition operations.

U.S. AFRICA COMMAND (AFRICOM)

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

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the AFRICOM Commander as part of the Global Force Management Process. For AFRICOM, their forces include allocated forces and CONUS-based regionally aligned forces that rotate into the Area of Responsibility (AOR) execute activities in support of the AFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan. Current posture allows for the forward staging of forces to provide required operational flexibility and timely crisis response, as required. Across AORs, I will work with the Department to balance competing requirements and resourcing demands in-line with DOD priorities.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Combatant Commanders to review global force posture, to include that within the AFRICOM AOR, and make my recommendations.

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

Answer. Defending U.S. interests, protecting the Homeland, and deterring our adversaries are global requirements for DOD. Africa is an important AOR to implement our national security objectives to degrade terrorists' capability to strike the Homeland and our personnel and facilities abroad; and to counter our adversaries' ability to undermine U.S. strategic interests.

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

Answer. China and Russia both seek to expand their influence in Africa. China primarily focuses on economic investment and infrastructure projects via its Belt and Road Initiative, though there is nascent military cooperation with some nations. Russia focuses on military partnerships, arms sales, and resource extraction. Both powers aim to challenge Western influence, though China's approach has generally been more systematic and economically focused compared to Russia's more opportunistic and security-oriented strategy.

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND (CENTCOM)

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

Answer. Key U.S. national security interests in the Middle east are (1) deterring threats to the U.S. Homeland that emanate from the Middle East (Iranian Threat Network, potential nuclear weapons, and VEOs), (2) supporting our allies and partners in the region (Israel, NATO, etc.), (3) counter-proliferation, preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, and (4) ensuring the free flow of goods, trade, and stability in the world energy supply.

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

Answer. The Middle East continues to face challenges emanating from terrorism, failed and fragile states, and pressure from Russia, China, and Iran. If confirmed,

I will continue to assess the U.S. military presence in the Middle East against our national strategic interests and in light of broader global requirements and make recommendations to the Secretary and the President.

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

Answer. The CENTCOM AOR faces a number of threats across multiple domains. The combined military, economic, humanitarian, and environmental threats that impact across the globe must be addressed by the combined efforts of U.S. and its allies and partners.

Our partners in the Middle East are eager to improve security cooperation and assume a greater share of the burden defending themselves against Iranian aggression and terrorist threats such as the Houthis and ISIS.

Improving ally and partner capability through training and improving the Foreign Military Sales process, as well as building and strengthening intelligence sharing and cooperative agreements like the RSC (Regional Security Construct) and MEAD (Middle East Air Defense) partnership will enable our A&P to assume a greater role in addressing regional security issues, while solidifying U.S. influence and our role as partner of choice for strategically important allies.

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

Answer. Russia has historically used its military presence in the Middle East to threaten the U.S. and our allies from the Mediterranean Sea and into Africa. Russian-affiliated forces attacked U.S. troops in Syria but were disavowed by Moscow. Russian government and Chinese state-owned enterprises have aligned with Iran to proliferate weapons, technology, and expertise used by terrorist organizations such as the Houthis that attack the U.S. military, Israel and our other allies and partners in the region. Chinese IT also introduces risk into the defense infrastructure of those Middle Eastern countries that choose to procure Chinese tech and equipment. Therefore, it is important for the military to work alongside other departments and agencies in the U.S. Government to address the diplomatic, economic, and informational threat posed by China and Russia as well as the direct military threat.

Iran

Question. What is your understanding of the objectives of the U.S. national security interests with respect to Iran? What is the role of the U.S. military in this strategy?

Answer. U.S. policy and our interest to deny Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, neutralize Iran's campaign of regional aggression, and disrupt the IRGC's destabilizing activities.

The Joint Force will retain the ability to deny Iran a nuclear weapon; identify and support action against Iranian and Iranian-backed threats; and disrupt terrorist threats that endanger the U.S. Homeland and U.S. interests. The U.S. military will work with our regional Middle East partners to increase their ability to deter and defend against Iranian aggression.

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

Answer.

IRAN. Iran possesses thousands of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and one-way attack UAVs capable of ranging Israeli and U.S. interests in the region and, over the past year, demonstrated its ability to employ its conventional military capabilities in two large-scale attacks directly against Israel. Their consideration of nuclear capability is troubling.

IRANIAN PROXIES. Iran maintains a network of nonState partners and proxies in the Middle East which have targeted U.S. and partner interests across the region and in international shipping lanes, and they have publicly justified these attacks due to Israeli operations against HAMAS and Lebanese Hizballah.

- **HOUTHIS.** Since Oct 2023, the Houthis have launched missiles and UAVs against Israeli territory, U.S. military ships and aircraft, hit multiple commercial vessels in the Red Sea, and seized and impounded one commercial vessel.
- **IAMGs.** Since 19 Oct 2023, Iranian-aligned groups have conducted over 200 attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq, Jordan, and Syria, as recently January—demonstrating they maintain at least limited operational capabilities in Syria—and they may resume sustained attacks with little to no warning, pending Iranian approval.

- **HIZBALLAH.** Since Oct 2023, Hizballah has conducted cross-border attacks against Israel and combatting Israeli forces in Lebanon and has not expressed an intent to target U.S. forces or interests in the Middle East.
- **HAMAS.** As of early Mar, HAMAS is focused on its long-term survival and has not publicly expressed an intent to target U.S. forces or interests in the Middle East; however, HAMAS political officials have publicly opposed plans for a sustained foreign presence in Gaza, suggesting the group likely would seek to target any non-Palestinian security force deployed to Gaza after the conflict.

Question. In your view, what would be the security implications for U.S. and regional security interests should Iran acquire a nuclear weapons capability?

Answer. Iranian leadership's decision calculus may be affected if its national priorities are threatened to include ensuring regime survival, maintaining national security from internal and external threats, and establishing itself as the regional dominant power in the Middle East.

Military force alone may not be sufficient to deter Iran, and an approach that includes diplomatic engagement and economic incentives may be necessary.

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

Answer. Iranian leadership's decision calculus may be affected if its national priorities are threatened to include ensuring regime survival, maintaining national security from internal and external threats, and establishing itself as the regional dominant power in the Middle East.

Military force alone may not be sufficient to deter Iran, and an approach that includes diplomatic engagement and economic incentives may be necessary.

Israel

Question. In your opinion, what are U.S. national security objectives with regards to Israel?

Answer. Israel is a model U.S. ally, and the U.S.-Israel alliance is of great importance to the United States. Enabling Israel's security and ability to defend itself is thus a key U.S. national security objective. Achieving durable security for Israel and strengthening formal and informal security cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbors will reduce the burden on the Joint Force and enable greater focus on threats elsewhere around the globe.

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

Answer. I defer to the Secretary and the President to set our policies toward foreign states, to include Israel. If confirmed, I will ensure that our military strategy and operations are aligned with the Secretary and the President's priorities and policies.

Syria and Iraq

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

Answer. The United States is in Syria to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS and to prevent external operations from ISIS and al-Qaeda from threatening the U.S. Homeland. The December 2024 fall of the Assad regime does not fundamentally alter these U.S. objectives.

I will work with the Secretary as this Administration assesses and develops United States policy for Syria.

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

Answer. The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS must continue to cooperate on counterterrorism efforts. U.S. must continue to work closely with allies and partners to address shared security concerns through a whole-of-government approach to eliminate threats to the Homeland.

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

Answer. It is my understanding that our partners in the SDF and ISF lead the fight against ISIS by shouldering the burden of operations with some U.S. assistance. These partners play a critical role in enabling our CT objectives while keeping the risk to and investment from U.S. forces low and economical. I will seek to work with the Secretary and interagency on the future of these relationships as regional dynamics continue to change and the Administration reviews its policies regarding Syria and Iraq.

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

Answer. I believe that U.S. troop levels in Syria should accord with our national policy and objectives. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Commander USCENTCOM to review our strategy and posture in Syria and make my recommendations.

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

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

Answer. Iraq has become a key partner for the U.S. in the region. The U.S. Mission in Iraq is committed to a lasting strategic partnership with the Government of Iraq and its people. The U.S. Government, along with the U.S. Mission to Iraq, actively collaborates with Iraqi partners to support a stable, prosperous, democratic, and unified Iraq. Our security relationship is an advisory, enabling, and assisting role.

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Commander USCENTCOM to review our strategy and posture in Iraq and make my recommendations.

South Asia

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

Answer. The most immediate U.S. interest in Afghanistan is to ensure the country is not a breeding ground for terrorist attacks against the United States, our overseas interests, and our allies and partners. This includes ensuring weapons provided to the former Afghan government do not fall into the hands of terrorists planning attacks on the United States. The U.S. works with partners in the region to achieve this objective. Over the long term, a more stable and self-sufficient Afghanistan would facilitate security and possibly open alternative trade routes from Central Asia.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Combatant Commanders to review global force posture and capabilities, to include that within the CENTCOM AOR, and make my recommendations.

Question. If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you recommend to U.S. relations with Pakistan?

Answer. Pakistan's location bordering China, India, Iran, and Afghanistan, and its status as a nuclear power make an ongoing strategic relationship important. I would aim to preserve the military-to-military relationship between the United States and Pakistan in areas of mutual interest such as counterterrorism. A constructive defense relationship facilitates regional stability and enhances counterterrorism efforts.

U.S. EUROPEAN COMMAND (EUCOM)

Question. Do you believe the deterrent posture in Europe is sufficient to deter further Russian aggression in Europe?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and the Combatant Commanders to review our force posture, to include that in the USEUCOM AOR, and make my recommendations.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and the Combatant Commanders to review our capabilities, capacity, and force posture, to include that in the USEUCOM AOR, and make my recommendations.

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

Answer. I have not been able to conduct an assessment of the United States air and missile defense capabilities and capacities to defend EUCOM critical infrastruc-

ture. However, If confirmed, I will work closely with the Joint Chiefs, and all of the Combatant Commanders to review our capabilities, capacity, and force posture across all theaters, to include EUCOM, in order to make fully informed recommendations to the Secretary of Defense. Additionally, the department will continue to work closely with Allies and Partners to ensure that we have an efficient and effective air and missile defense force posture across the theater.

Question. If confirmed, what specific changes would you make to U.S. capabilities or force posture in Europe to execute the Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance more effectively?

Answer. Europe continues to face challenges emanating from conventional to transnational threats in its immediate vicinity and beyond. If confirmed, I will continue to assess the U.S. military presence in Europe against our national strategic interests and in light of broader global requirements and make recommendations to the Secretary and the President.

European Deterrence Initiative (EDI)

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

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs, and the Combatant Commanders to review our capabilities, capacity, and force posture, to include the EDI, and make my recommendations.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I will need to assess the future requirements in Europe, with the Service Chiefs, to make recommendations regarding future EDI funding.

NATO Alliance

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

Answer. The North Atlantic Treaty is very important to U.S. strategic interests. Any use of armed force to fulfill our commitments under Article 5 would need to be carried out pursuant to the President's powers under Article II of the U.S. Constitution, the War Powers Act, and subsequent congressional authorizations for use of military force or a formal declaration of war.

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

Answer. At the 2024 Washington Summit, the Alliance reaffirmed its purpose and principles found in NATO's Strategic Concept, and its three core tasks of Collective Defense, Cooperative Security, and Crisis Management. I'm aligned with these objectives and in my view, the greatest challenge the Alliance faces is its ability to adapt and develop, politically and militarily, to meet the challenges of an unpredictable and competitive world.

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

Answer. As long as NATO remains a nuclear alliance, it is important for the U.S. to maintain nuclear weapons forward deployed in NATO countries. These forward-based weapons contribute to U.S. extended deterrence, complicate adversary decision calculus, and reassure our NATO Allies.

The United States nuclear commitment to NATO remains a core element of our deterrence policy and strategy. As the backbone of deterrence since its founding, NATO nuclear policy seeks to preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression.

Question. Do you believe that NATO should expand the nuclear sharing role to additional alliance members?

Answer. Nuclear sharing arrangements can refer both to U.S. nuclear weapons hosted on the territory of NATO Allies and to Allied provision of Dual-Capable Aircraft (DCA) that could carry U.S. nuclear weapons as part of a NATO nuclear mission. While these facets of nuclear sharing are related, one does not require the other. From a military perspective, expanding NATO allies' participation in the nuclear deterrence mission in some capacity would enhance flexibility, survivability, and military capability. If confirmed, I will work with USEUCOM and SACEUR to evaluate the cost/benefit of such a decision.

Question. What do you see as the benefits, or negative consequences, of NATO countries individually pursuing their own nuclear weapons?

Answer. Nuclear proliferation, even among Allies, significantly limits U.S. ability to manage escalation risk. It could trigger further acceleration of adversary efforts to modernize and expand their nuclear arsenals. Additionally, it would irreparably erode the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and could encourage proliferation around the world.

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

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

Answer. U.S. leadership within the Alliance is critical to Alliance cohesion and integration. As the most capable and largest NATO member, the U.S. is the only member that has the stature to lead the Alliance in a cohesive and unified manner. The dual-hatted positions throughout the NATO command structure ensure close integration of U.S. thought and operational intent and maintain unity of effort and focus across the Alliance. The dual-hatted arrangement, in which SACEUR is an American combatant commander, is particularly important for the fulfillment of the United States' nuclear deterrence commitment to NATO.

Russia

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

Answer. Russia very likely remains deterred from an overt military attack against the U.S. or NATO; however, Moscow retains the ability and willingness to conduct asymmetric activity below what it assesses to be the threshold of military conflict. The conflict in Ukraine very likely has strained its conventional military forces, increasing Russia's dependence on its nuclear arsenal as a means of deterrence to protect itself from perceived external military threats.

Question. In your view, which EUCOM and NATO activities most deter Russia and mitigate the Russian threat to NATO Allies and partners?

Answer. Russia very likely is deterred by the U.S. and NATO's nuclear arsenal and the threat of direct military confrontation with the U.S. and NATO. Russia's threat perceptions almost certainly are driven by a belief that the U.S. and broader West seek the strategic defeat of the Russian State. As such, Moscow views any actions by the U.S. and broader West, especially those in the vicinity of Moscow's perceived sphere of influence, as intended to undermine Russian interests. However, Moscow calibrates its responses to these perceived undermining activities to demonstrate resolve without prompting an escalatory response from the U.S. and/or the broader West.

Question. What aspects of U.S. and NATO force posture do you assess as having the most significant deterrent effect on Russia?

Answer. Russia very likely is deterred by the U.S. and NATO's nuclear arsenal and the threat of direct military confrontation with the U.S. and NATO. Russia's threat perceptions almost certainly are driven by a belief that the U.S. and broader West seek the strategic defeat of the Russian State. As such, Moscow views any actions by the U.S. and broader West, especially those in the vicinity of Moscow's perceived sphere of influence, as intended to undermine Russian interests. However, Moscow calibrates its responses to these perceived undermining activities to demonstrate resolve without prompting an escalatory response from the U.S. and/or the broader West.

Question. In your view, what should DOD do to counter Russian malign influence in Europe?

Answer. We must encourage our Allies and partners to increase their capability and capacity, and prioritize outcome driven relationships. I will continue to work alongside our NATO Allies to deter and, if necessary, defend against any threat, and build resilience against malign influence and hybrid activities.

Ukraine

Question. In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale, unprovoked, and illegal invasion on Ukraine.

How do you assess the trajectory of the conflict and the role that the Department of Defense should play?

Answer. Russian President Putin remains committed to pursuing his objectives in Ukraine to include securing territorial gains and forcing Ukrainian neutrality. Mos-

cow likely views the conflict is in its favor and will continue to prosecute the war in 2025 despite high casualties from continued operations. Russia's approved 2025 budget contains higher levels of defense spending compared to 2024 and is the highest it has been since the cold war. Defense spending is projected to be double that of social spending, which suggests Moscow is committed to sustaining its war efforts. The conflict in 2025 likely will continue to be a war of attrition, with both sides suffering heavy losses of personnel and materiel. Russian forces gained nearly 4,000 square kilometers in 2024, seven times more than in 2023, with the majority of those advances occurring in eastern Donetsk.

Following the 18 February meeting between U.S. and Russian officials in Riyadh, the Kremlin publicly reiterated willingness to work with Washington on a negotiated settlement and expressed interest in continued high-level dialog with the United States. Russia later reiterated Moscow will not accept a cease-fire without a long-term settlement that addresses Russia's core security concerns.

Question. Do you believe it is important for the United States to continue providing security assistance to Ukraine, including after the conclusion of the war, as a means to help Ukraine deter and defeat Russian aggression?

Answer. From a military standpoint, Ukraine has the right to self-defense, and from that standpoint our security assistance helps Ukraine to defend itself. Our assistance improves Ukraine's position at the negotiating table and deters Russia from further aggression. The United States is only a part of the network of states supporting Ukraine's defense, and we should focus on what unique capabilities only the U.S. can provide, while Europe increases its share of support. After the conclusion of the war, we should continue to assist Ukraine with its future force development and long-term stability.

Question. What do you see as the role of U.S. security assistance in building the capabilities and capacity of Ukraine to meet its military requirements to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity in the short, medium, and long-term?

Answer. The U.S. and our Allies are studying Ukraine's immediate wartime needs to defend the front line, as well as how to build its future force and defense industry to develop organic capabilities for long-term self-defense. In this way, we are helping Ukraine become more self-sufficient. Other aspects of short, and long-term force development include advising missions and training.

U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND (INDOPACOM)

Question. U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific region remains heavily concentrated in Japan and South Korea.

Is the current U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific region sufficient to support the Trump Administration's Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance? How would you propose to restructure U.S. security posture in the Indo-Pacific to counter Chinese aggression, if confirmed? Please explain your answer.

Answer. An increasingly aggressive China poses both short and long-term challenges. If confirmed, I will assess the U.S. military presence in the Indo-Pacific against our national strategic interests and make recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

Question. In your view, what would be the impact of significant reductions to our force posture in Japan or South Korea on the security situation in the Indo-Pacific region?

Answer. North Korea's long-range missile and nuclear programs represent an immediate security challenge. If confirmed, I will assess the U.S. military presence in Japan and South Korea and make recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

Question. In your assessment, what are the priority investments DOD could make to implement the National Defense Strategy and improve the military balance in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. The Department works closely with INDOPACOM and allies and partners in the region to ensure the Department is making investments that advance National Defense Strategy priorities, close Combatant Commanders priority gaps, and improve integrated deterrence. Participating in regional multi-national exercises and sustaining forward forces assists with improving the military balance in the region. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Services and Congress to advance investments that improve lethality within INDOPACOM to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Question. Do you believe that continued, dedicated funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative is required to support implementation of the National Defense Strategy in the Indo-Pacific? Please explain your answer.

Answer. The programs, investments, and activities included in the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) are critical for providing a credible combat deterrent and

maintaining the free and open order in the Western Pacific. PDI is a subset of the Department's budget request, not a separate fund. If confirmed, I will work with the INDOPACOM and the Services to ensure we continue to fund the most important programs to strengthen deterrence.

Question. In your view, what is the role of ground forces in the Indo-Pacific during competition, crisis, and conflict?

Answer. The role of ground forces in the Indo-Pacific region is complex and multifaceted, evolving across the spectrum of competition, crisis, and conflict. Right now, they serve as a deterrent and offer opportunities to expand training and partnerships with allies. In times of crisis, they can offer a rapid response option as well as a way of protecting U.S. interests in the region (U.S. citizens, infrastructure, etc). During conflict, they can provide options for force projection, area denial/control, and stabilization/reconstruction. In any case, the China threat is dynamic and United States ground forces must continue to adapt and modernize to maintain a competitive edge.

Question. Congress mandated the establishment of the Joint Force Headquarters at INDOPACOM. What is your view of INDOPACOM's progress in establishing the Joint Force Headquarters? What are the requirements for the Joint Force Headquarters at INDOPACOM to fully execute its function?

Answer. The ability to respond effectively to crises in the region, using the Joint Force with all its combined capabilities, is paramount. Admiral Paparo has stated that, in a Joint Operations Area (JOA) within the Theater of War, the U.S. Pacific Fleet would serve as the Joint Task Force (JTF), a capability for which they were certified in 2023. The existing structure, which leverages the proven capabilities of service components and their ability to function as JTFs, provides the necessary flexibility and responsiveness to address a wide range of potential crises within the INDOPACOM AOR. It should be able to fully execute its purpose in its current form.

Question. Can you describe the strategic and operational importance of Guam to executing INDOPACOM's plans and operations in the region? Can you describe the State of military infrastructure and facilities on Guam in the wake of Typhoon Mawar? Do you agree that it is critical for Guam to be reconstructed in a resilient manner so that the U.S. military can utilize Guam as a power projection platform in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. Guam's strategic location and military capabilities make it a key hub indispensable hub for United States power projection in the Indo-Pacific. However, Typhoon Mawar, which struck Guam in May 2023, caused significant damage to military infrastructure and facilities on the island. This highlighted the vulnerability of the island's critical infrastructure to natural disasters, which underscores the need to invest in order to ensure its ability to withstand future threats, both natural and man-made. A resilient Guam helps ensure the United States can effectively deter aggression, respond to crises, and protect its interests in the region.

Question. Do you support the efforts by the United States and Japan to establish a modernized command-and-control structure, to include an improved U.S. Forces Japan? Do you agree that the Department of Defense should move as fast as possible to establish a new command-and-control structure with Japan, considering its strategic importance as a capable ally in the Indo-Pacific?

Answer. Yes, modernizing the United States-Japan command-and-control structure will help maintain a credible deterrent and ensure the alliance's effectiveness in a rapidly changing security environment.

China

Question. The 2022 National Defense Strategy describes the People's Republic of China (PRC) as "the most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security" and states "The PRC seeks to undermine U.S. alliances and security partnership in the Indo-Pacific region, and leverage its growing capabilities, including its economic influence and the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) growing strength and military footprint, to coerce its neighbors and threaten their interest."

How would you characterize the current U.S. relationship with China?

Answer. The President has made it clear we must be clear-eyed about China's intentions and actions. Many of the Chinese Communist Party's values and interests are at odds with those of the United States. However, I defer to the Secretaries of Defense and State to characterize our current relationship.

Question. What is your assessment of the current State of U.S.-China military-to-military relations? What do you believe should be the objectives of U.S.-China military-to-military dialog? What are the limitations on this kind of dialog?

Answer. Engagements with the PLA may offer opportunities for the U.S. to influence China's military behavior and encourage adherence to norms and standards,

but we should be realistic about what we can achieve. A properly postured and equipped Joint Force does more to influence China's behavior than engagement. If the President and the Secretary believe I can move U.S. objectives forward by engaging with my PLA counterpart, I will.

Question. What do you believe are the objectives of China's steady increase in defense spending and its overall military modernization program? In what technology areas are you most concerned about the erosion of U.S. advantages?

Answer. The PLA remains focused on developing its capabilities across all warfare domains to become a joint force capable of the full range of land, air, and maritime as well as nuclear, space, counterspace, EW, and cyberspace operations. The PLA remains focused on developing capabilities to provide options for China to dissuade, deter, or, if ordered, defeat third-party intervention in the Indo-Pacific region. China's stated defense policy remains oriented toward advancing its sovereignty, security, and development interests while emphasizing a greater global role for itself. Beijing has demonstrated an increasing willingness to use military coercion and inducements to achieve these aims. The PLA's rapid developments in missile, aircraft, and unmanned aerial systems have greatly advanced in the past 20 years.

Question. In your view what are the implications of China's nuclear buildup on the credibility of deterrence and extended deterrence in Asia?

Answer. China's nuclear buildup presents a challenge to U.S. deterrence capabilities and extended deterrence commitments to allies in the Indo-Pacific. To preserve stability in the region and deter potential aggression from China, the U.S. must continue to fully invest in a modernized nuclear force. This will ensure credibility for our deterrent and extended deterrence commitments in the future.

Taiwan

Question. How do you assess the current military balance across the Taiwan Strait? What do you believe should be the priorities for U.S. military assistance to Taiwan? Do you think Taiwan is making appropriate investments in its defensive capabilities and if not, what changes would you recommend?

Answer. There is a very stark imbalance in capabilities across the Taiwan Strait. As indicated in DOD's annual China Military Power Report (CMPR), China continues to modernize its military capabilities and invest in advanced weapons systems. These include aircraft carriers, anti-ship missiles, submarines, ballistic missiles, and cyber capabilities. The PLA is capable of projecting power through operations and exercises near Taiwan and throughout the region. Taiwan's military, although growing, is much smaller in comparison and lacks many similar capabilities.

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Commander USINDOPACOM to review the capabilities and requirements of Taiwan and make my recommendations.

Question. Some have argued that the United States should explicitly State that we would respond militarily to any Chinese use of force against Taiwan as a means to deter such actions. In your view, what would be the benefits and risks of such a policy change?

Answer. My focus is implementing the President's current policy, which opposes any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side and to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability. Respectfully, I will provide my military advice on significant policy changes when the President and Secretary invite me to do so.

The Korean Peninsula

Question. What is your assessment of the threat posed by North Korea to regional and global stability?

Answer. The DPRK nuclear, missile, and cyber capabilities continue to threaten the United States and its allies on a global scale. Pyongyang has tested multiple missile systems capable of striking U.S. forces in the ROK and Japan, as well as Guam, Alaska, Hawaii, and CONUS. Additionally, the DPRK conducts persistent cyber activities, such as cryptocurrency theft and adaptive cybercrime TTPs to generate funds and obtain technical information in support of the regime's military and WMD programs. Pyongyang's comprehensive strategic partnership with Moscow very likely will enable it to further improve its military capabilities, increasing the threat to regional stability and U.S. interests.

Question. In your view, are there additional steps that DOD should take to improve U.S. and allied defenses against North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the USNORTHCOM, USSTRATCOM, USSPACECOM, USINDOPACOM, and Combined Forces Command-Korea Commanders to review and enhance the status of our mis-

sile defense capabilities against the DPRK and make my recommendations in line with President Trump's Golden Dome for America.

Question. What will you do to ensure that trilateral military cooperation between the U.S., Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) accelerates?

Answer. I support the Trilateral Security Cooperation Framework and, if confirmed, will continue to advocate for using the Trilateral Security Cooperation Framework as a blueprint for military cooperation in exercises like FREEDOM EDGE and operationally through efforts such as our trilateral missile data warning sharing mechanism.

Question. Do you believe that the ROK has met the requirements for the conditions-based operational control transition plan allowing it to assume wartime control of its military? If not, what does the ROK still need to do to achieve OPCON transition?

Answer. The United States and ROK currently have a conditions-based operational control transition plan (COTP) in place. The COTP requires the ROK to meet the conditions associated with their stand-alone capability and that the security environment is conducive for the ROK to assume the lead of a U.S.-ROK combined command prior to transition. The ROK continues to increase and improve capabilities by acquiring equipment and experience through multi-domain and trilateral exercises. If confirmed, I will review the conditions outlined within the existing plan before making my recommendation.

Question. What are your views on the use of landmines to deter conflict on the Korean Peninsula? Do you support continuing efforts by DOD to modernize related terrain shaping capabilities?

Answer. Landmines have been used on the Korean peninsula since the Korean War and there are still millions of landmines deployed along the demilitarized zone to deter North Korean aggression. If confirmed, I will review the deployment of landmines on the Korean peninsula.

U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND (NORTHCOM)

Defense Support to Civil Authorities

Question. Civil authorities may request DOD support for domestic disasters and certain counter-drug operations as well as in managing the consequences of a terrorist event employing a weapon of mass destruction.

In your view, are the procedures by which Federal, State, and Local agencies request DOD support efficient, effective, and timely?

Answer. Yes, the procedures by which Federal, State, and Local agencies request DOD support have been honed over decades and are effective in ensuring that DOD is able to provide a rapid and flexible response for potential or actual emergencies or disasters within the United States, territories, possessions, and protectorates, upon receiving a validated request for assistance formally asking DOD to provide assistance to a local, State, tribal, or other Federal agency.

Question. What factors should be considered in determining whether DOD will provide support to a civil authority?

Answer. If confirmed, I would ensure that DOD remains a reliable and responsive partner to civil authorities while adhering to legal and operational principles. By continuously refining procedures, enhancing interagency training, and leveraging lessons learned from past emergencies, we can strengthen our collective ability to respond effectively to crises and safeguard the American people.

Question. Do you believe it is in the best interests of DOD to provide support to civil authorities on a reimbursable basis?

Answer. Yes, providing DOD resources, when appropriately requested and validated, in response to emergencies, law enforcement support, and other domestic activities when non-DoD capabilities are overwhelmed or unavailable is appropriate.

Transnational Criminal Organizations

Question. Transnational criminal organizations are engaged in a wide variety of illicit activities, including money laundering, human trafficking illicit financial flows, illegal trade in natural resources and wildlife, and trade in illegal drugs, precursors and weapons. These activities reach not only the entirety of the Western Hemisphere, but increasingly throughout the world.

In your assessment, how has the threat to the United States from transnational criminal organizations evolved?

Answer. Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) almost certainly will continue to prioritize their profits and will engage in activities that may threaten the United States such as drug or human trafficking in pursuit of illicit business interests. Over the past two decades, TCOs have adapted to increased government regu-

lation and enforcement efforts by diversifying their revenue streams, updating drug manufacturing processes, and changing trafficking TTP. Most fentanyl is trafficked through U.S. ports of entry, judging from CBP seizure information. TCO adaptability likely will challenge Latin American governments' capacities to effectively counter criminal violence for at least the next year.

TCOs likely seek to avoid excessive violence in the United States or against U.S. citizens that may attract additional law enforcement scrutiny. However, TCO-driven criminal violence in Latin America—particularly Mexico—raises the risk of spillover violence in the United States or toward U.S. personnel operating near the U.S. southern border. TCOs degrade Latin American State capacity through their engagement in corruption and some organizations' ability to overwhelm security forces in limited engagements. Weakened Latin American states almost certainly are less able to contain violence. In Mexico, the military generally maintains the capabilities to counter TCO attacks but lacks the capacity to sustain a long-term campaign to decisively defeat criminal groups.

U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND (SOUTHCOM)

Question. If confirmed, what recommendations would you make to the President to deter Russian, Cuban, and Chinese influence in the SOUTHCOM AOR?

Answer. The Chinese and Russian governments use economic pressure and disinformation campaigns to influence the governments in Latin America and the Caribbean in their favor. Their actions often counter U.S. interests and destabilize democratic partner nations. The U.S. should work to remain the partner of choice by maintaining strong regional presence and investing in programs that will build partner capacity to deter Chinese, Russian, and Cuban influence.

Question. Do you believe these influences threaten hemispheric security and prosperity?

Answer. China and Russia use varying tools to influence the Western Hemisphere according to their interests. While in the short-term Chinese activities might translate into positive economic outcomes, long-term, we have seen that many of these projects undercut local competition or impede on partner nation's sovereignty. Russia's actions support authoritarian regimes who undermine the security and prosperity of the United States and other peace seeking nations.

Detainee Treatment and Guantanamo Bay Naval Station

Question. Do you support the standards for detainee treatment specified in Army Field Manual 2-22.3, Human Intelligence Collector Operations, issued in September 2006 and DOD Directive 2310.01E, Department of Defense Detainee Program, dated August 19, 2014, and required by Section 1045 of the NDAA for fiscal year 2016?

Answer. Yes.

Counternarcotics Activities

Question. DOD serves as lead agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime foreign shipments of drugs flowing toward the United States. On an annual basis, DOD expends nearly \$1 billion to build the counternarcotics capacity of U.S. Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies and certain foreign governments.

What changes, if any, should be made to DOD's counternarcotics strategy and supporting activities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Combatant Commanders to review our approach to counternarcotics.

Question. In your view, what should be DOD's role in countering the flow of narcotics to nations other than the United States?

Answer. The Joint Force should continue to assess how it can best leverage intelligence assets and partnership capacity building to support these partners' efforts to disrupt and degrade drug-trafficking organizations at the source. If confirmed, I can better assess the DOD's role in countering the global flow of narcotics.

Question. How, if at all, should U.S. security assistance be scoped to address factors at the root of counternarcotics trafficking, in your opinion?

Answer. The Joint Force should continue to assess how it can best leverage intelligence assets and partnership capacity building to support these partners' efforts to disrupt and degrade drug-trafficking organizations at the source. If confirmed, I can better assess the DOD's role in countering the global flow of narcotics.

Venezuela

Question. What is your assessment of the current situation in Venezuela and to what degree is the illegitimate Maduro regime dependent on support from external actors like Russia, Cuba, and China?

Answer. Disputed President Nicolas Maduro continues to hold on to power with support from the Venezuelan military and key partners Russia, China, and Iran very likely mitigating the impact of international sanctions through limited economic and defense support.

Historically, Russia was Venezuela's largest defense supplier, although military supply has declined in recent years. China provides economic cooperation, but mirrors Russia with declining defense support. Ties with Iran have weakened under President Maduro, but current security cooperation includes aircraft maintenance, chemical plant construction, and UAV sales. Cuba and Venezuela have shared a robust security, political, and economic relationship for nearly two decades.

Question. How would you assess Venezuelan relations with China, Cuba, Iran, and Russia vis-&-vis the national interests of the United States?

Answer. The rationale for Venezuelan relations with China, Cuba, Iran, and Russia is the desire to prosper under U.S. sanctions through mutual trade and support. A current goal of the Maduro regime is to gain formal admittance into the international economic bloc, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS). Caracas uses its oil reserves as its main bargaining tool, primarily with Beijing to whom they export the majority of their crude oil. The U.S. is Venezuela's preferred oil customer, and Caracas' dependance on foreign support correlates with U.S. sanctions. Russia and Venezuela are increasing economic trade and investment in the face of sanctions by the U.S. and other western countries. Venezuela has also signed various agreements with Iran in energy, science, oil, defense, culture, economy, and food sectors.

U.S. SPACE FORCE AND U.S. SPACE COMMAND (SPACECOM)

Question. The United States is increasingly dependent on space, both economically and militarily. Our great power competitors are making concerted efforts to leap ahead of U.S. technology and impact U.S. freedom of action in the space warfighting domain. The Space Force, within the Department of the Air Force, and a unified Space Command, deal with the contested domain of space, upon which the terrestrial forces of the United States and peer competitors are highly reliant for support.

In your view, does the current National Defense Strategy accurately assess the strategic environment as it pertains to the domain of space? If confirmed, what changes would you make to the National Defense Strategy regarding the space domain?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the specifics of the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance (INDSG) as it applies to Space. Our competitors continue to view space as a key competitive environment and future National Defense Strategy documents should reflect this strategic reality.

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. Both China and Russia have developed and fielded counterspace capabilities designed to hold U.S. Government and commercial satellites at risk and undermine U.S. advantages. We must accelerate the transition to a more resilient space architecture, strengthen our ability to deter, counter, and defeat threats in, from, through, and to space, and protect our Joint Force from adversary hostile uses of space. If confirmed, I will support the development of innovative concepts and cutting-edge space-based capabilities to maintain deterrence and preserve U.S. freedom of action in the space domain.

Question. Are there other nation-states or actors operating in space that you perceive as a risk to the United States, or as cause for concern? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes. This past year, it was revealed that Russia is working on a nuclear space-based antisatellite (ASAT) capability, which would violate the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and indiscriminately threaten the vast majority of satellites operated by countries and companies around the world, leading to worldwide commercial disruptions. China is testing counterspace capabilities, including satellites capable of rendezvous and proximity operations and use of electronic jamming and cyber operations against ground networks; China's aggressive cyber targeting of U.S. infrastructure, including satellite networks, may deny critical U.S. capabilities in the event of a conflict in the Indo-Pacific. In 2024, Iran placed six space payloads into orbit and continues to develop its space launch capabilities; knowledge gained from orbital launches is applicable to development of an ICBM that could directly threaten the U.S. Homeland, if Iran chose to pursue such a capability. The commercial sector and other nations are rapidly expanding activities in space, leading to the risk of increasing orbital congestion.

Question. How would you assess current DOD readiness to implement the 2022 National Defense Strategy and U.S. strategic objectives as they relate to the domain of space?

Answer. The United States' space superiority is being challenged because our adversaries, notably China and Russia, continue to rapidly develop counterspace systems to hold our space-based assets and capabilities at risk. China specifically is launching advanced threats at breakneck speeds which can target multiple capabilities across all orbital regimes. Additionally, Iran and North Korea are strengthening their own space programs with the assistance of China and Russia, which is increasing the threat environment. The United States needs to continue to prioritize the robustness and defense of our Space architecture across ground, link, and space segments to promote resilience, restore deterrence, and ensure that space-based capabilities are ready for the joint warfighter 24/7.

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

Answer. This past year, it was revealed that Russia is working on a nuclear space-based antisatellite (ASAT) capability, which would violate the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and indiscriminately threaten the vast majority of satellites operated by countries and companies around the world, leading to worldwide commercial disruptions. China is testing counterspace capabilities, including satellites capable of rendezvous and proximity operations and use of electronic jamming and cyber operations against ground networks; China's aggressive cyber targeting of U.S. infrastructure, including satellite networks, might help it deny the U.S. with critical capabilities in the event of a conflict in the Indo-Pacific. In 2024, Iran placed six space payloads into orbit and continues to develop its space launch capabilities; knowledge gained from orbital launches is applicable to development of an ICBM that could directly threaten the U.S. Homeland, if Iran chose to pursue such a capability. The commercial sector and other nations are rapidly expanding activities in space, leading to the risk of increasing orbital congestion.

Question. Do you support the development of offensive space systems to counter threats in the space warfighting domain?

Answer. Yes, I support the development of space systems that can be used offensively to protect the United States' and our allies' space systems and to restore deterrence. Space capabilities are only defensive, or offensive based on how they are employed. Space is integral to everyday life and a crucial component underpinning global security and the global economy. Competitors continue to grow their counterspace capabilities. To protect our national security interests, we should continue to scale a breadth of options across all domains to deter aggression, and if deterrence fails, to prevail in conflict.

Question. Do you support the development of defensive space systems to counter threats in the space warfighting domain?

Answer. Space capabilities are only defensive, or offensive based on how they are employed. Space is integral to everyday life and a crucial component underpinning global security and the global economy. Competitors continue to grow their counterspace and space capabilities. We need to take actions to protect all our assets, to include those in space. There are both active and passive measures we can take to deter an attack on our space systems. By placing capabilities in different orbits, in different parts of the electromagnetic spectrum, or on ally or commercial satellites, we can complicate our enemy's decisionmaking. Active on-orbit defensive capabilities are something we should consider and implement if it needed.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that commercial technology is appropriately incorporated into SPACECOM mission execution at acceptable risk levels?

Answer. If confirmed, a priority will be understanding the USSPACECOM and U.S. Space Force's methods of addressing capability gaps and leveraging commercial technologies to fulfil emerging requirements. I will seek ways to support the space industrial base and accelerate the acquisitions process. I intend to improve USSPACECOM's ability to rapidly field emerging technology to assist the joint force in being the strongest and most lethal force in the world.

CYBERSECURITY AND U.S. CYBER COMMAND (CYBERCOM)

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

What role do you envision for DOD and the Cyber Mission Force in defending the Nation from an attack in cyberspace? In what ways is this role distinct from those of the Homeland security and law enforcement communities?

Answer. The Department's role in defending the Nation from an attack in cyberspace continues to evolve. DOD partners with the Department of Homeland Security and other Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies in protecting against and responding to cyber-attacks against the Nation and its critical infrastructure. The Cyber Mission Force is primarily charged with defending forward, conducting defensive cyber operations abroad, while DHS and law enforcement work directly with organizations at home.

The Joint Force is uniquely suited to integrating actions in multiple domains in defense of the DOD Information Network (DODIN) to compete now and prepare for escalation. Since cyber knows no borders, we must partner with our interagency partners and law enforcement to address the entire spectrum of cyberspace challenges.

While agencies like DHS and the FBI focus on civilian infrastructure and criminal investigations, the DOD and CMF's priority is defending against cyber threats with strategic or military implications. This includes global power projection, nuclear command and control, and support to DHS's CISA when responding to threats to the Defense Industrial Base. Effective national cybersecurity demands close collaboration between DOD and other entities. As an example, in January 2025, the DOD and DHS signed an Annex to the 2017 DOD-DHS Memorandum of Agreement on Cybersecurity and Cyberspace Operations. The Annex establishes a framework for the Coast Guard Cyber Command to present United States Coast Guard cyber forces to the CMF under USCYBERCOM, which will further bolster CMF readiness and capabilities. It also provides a process for USCYBERCOM to present forces to the Coast Guard.

Question. How will "defend forward" and "persistent engagement" concepts deter and disrupt Russia and China in cyberspace?

Answer. The DOD uses "defend forward" to disrupt malicious cyber activity at its source and "persistent engagement" to intercept and halt cyber threats, degrade the capabilities and networks of adversaries, and continuously strengthen the cybersecurity of DOD networks and missions. This occurs both geographically (beyond DOD networks and into the networks of our Allies and partners) and temporally (ahead of potential adversary exploitation) to enable resilience in both domestic and foreign partner networks. For example, U.S. CYBERCOM hunt forward missions in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility have discovered CCP malware on multiple foreign partner networks.

Question. If confirmed, what role should DOD and the Cyber Mission Force have in combating foreign influence operations, especially those conducted via social media?

Answer. If confirmed, I will examine the role the Cyber Mission Force plays alongside our interagency partners to combat foreign influence on our shores. While our domestic authority is rightly limited, our foreign intelligence enterprise helps ascertain sources and objectives of foreign influence operations and can contribute to designing persistent approaches to counter these operations at their source.

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

Answer. The DOD will partner with DHS, DOJ, and other entities to help defend U.S. key interests—especially where those entities underpin military operations. Cooperatively streamlining industry information sharing and seamlessly cooperating with interagency partners will enable us to predict, present, or, when necessary, speed the response of the most appropriate government agency.

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

Answer. Yes, I believe that the Commander, USCYBERCOM and Director, NSA should be filled by the same person. The 2022 "Joint Study on the Dual-Hat" recommended the dual-hat arrangement not only be maintained but strengthened. I continue to agree with the findings of that study. The Dual-Hat arrangement provides the ability to look across both organizations and has empowered both USCYBERCOM and NSA to fulfill their missions better than each could do alone. It promotes agility and enables intelligence to be operationalized rapidly. It also facilitates relationships with key foreign allies and partners in part because the corresponding foreign organizations with signals intelligence (SIGINT) and cyber operations missions are fully integrated, operating under a Dual-Hat leadership structure. The span of control, does however, place a burden on one leader.

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

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to taking action to foster a culture of cybersecurity and cyber awareness across the various levels of professional military and civilian education. Every member of the Joint Force, to include General Officer and Senior Executive Service leadership, must understand their role in cybersecurity and protecting DOD networks.

Question. In your opinion, what characteristics of a cyberattack would constitute an “act of war”? Do you consider the recent breaches in telecommunications infrastructure involving Salt Typhoon to be an “act of war” or an espionage operation that falls within de facto norms? In your view, does the nature and scope of this intrusion operation merit a strong and tangible response? Please explain your answer.

Answer. A holistic and interagency response is vital to any provocation, including in the cyber domain. The following should be considered when examining the aspects of a cyberattack: Scale and Impact; Intention to Cause Physical Harm or Damage; Targeting of civilian populations; State Actor Involvement; and Military Objectives. If confirmed, I will review the classified details and provide my recommendations to the President and Secretary of Defense.

Question. What do you conclude from cyber-attacks carried out by Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon about the State of our cyber defenses?

Answer. To the extent that cyber actors affiliated with the CCP can compromise U.S. networks, it is certainly a national security concern and suggest that the U.S. needs to invest in hardening its critical IT infrastructure. This should be a combination of private and public investment, and such investment should stand alongside public and private partnerships to identify and defend portions of infrastructure that the DOD deems critical to our national interest.

Question. Based on your experience, what do you see as areas where the structure and training of the Cyber Mission Force should evolve to meet emerging cyber threats?

Answer. The CMF structure is largely unchanged since its inception over a decade ago. The commander of United States Cyber Command needs to have the latitude to structure and restructure the force to address rapidly evolving challenges, and to develop and promulgate training that will maximize the competence and capability of cyber operators both inside and outside the CMF. The Department is working rapidly toward those ends with the CYBERCOM 2.0 initiative, which emphasizes managing cyber talent and use of emerging technology like Artificial Intelligence. The CMF will benefit greatly from better access to, and assistance from, top technical talent at civilian technology companies, while continuing to leverage Reserve component expertise.

Question. In your view, are there elements missing from our current approach for offensive and defensive cyber operations that you would recommend we pursue?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review CYBERCOM 2.0 to ensure we are on an upward trajectory and will continue pursuing mastery at scale to counter maneuvering adversaries and a rapidly changing threat landscape.

Question. How would you characterize our deterrent posture when it comes to cyber effects?

Answer. Through partnerships, information sharing, and persistent engagement, we may impose enough costs on our adversaries forcing them to relook their strategic calculus in creating cyber effects against key U.S. interests. To deter our adversaries from using cyber effects against the U.S., a whole of government approach is needed, incorporating all elements of national power.

U.S. TRANSPORTATION COMMAND (TRANSCOM)

Question. In your view, what is the role of TRANSCOM in supporting implementation of the 2022 National Defense Strategy?

Answer. The priorities outlined in the National Defense Strategy, whether defending the Homeland, deterring attacks on the United States and partners, or deterring aggression do not happen without USTRANSCOM providing strategic flexibility through globally integrated operations. The TRANSCOM infrastructure is an area of American exclusivity. No other nation in the world can do the things we do on a daily basis.

USTRANSCOM ensures rapid response anywhere in the world by conducting globally integrated mobility operations, leading the Unified Command Plan (UCP)-directed Joint Deployment and Distribution Enterprise, and providing the capabilities to project and sustain the Joint Force in support of National Objectives. Additionally, USTRANSCOM's role as the Single Manager for Global Bulk Fuel Management and Delivery drives synchronization across the Joint Petroleum Enterprise

(JPE) for posture, planning, execution, and capabilities in support of combatant command requirements and national security objectives.

With respect to the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance, as the leader of the Joint Deployment and Distribution Enterprise, USTRANSCOM projects, maneuvers, and sustains military power at a time and place of choice. This gives the President and Secretary of Defense options that are lethal, resilient, sustainable, survivable, agile, and ready to defeat any adversary. This enterprise is critical to the re-alignment of Joint Force priorities and essential to deterring adversaries across the globe.

Question. What is your understanding of how TRANSCOM balances both organic and privately owned sealift equities to support the National Defense Strategy?

Answer. USTRANSCOM follows direction contained in the National Security Directive on Sealift (NSD 28) which states, "The U.S.-owned commercial ocean carrier industry, to the extent it is capable, will be relied upon to provide sealift in peace, crisis, and war. This capability will be augmented during crisis and war by reserve fleets comprised of ships with national defense features that are not available in sufficient numbers or types in the active U.S.-owned commercial industry." For commercial sealift, USTRANSCOM relies on the authorities of the Department of Transportation (DoT) to expand civil transportation through voluntary programs under the Defense Production Act.

Two Emergency Preparedness Programs, the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA) and the Voluntary Tanker Agreement (VTA) provide DOD a coordinated, seamless transition from peacetime to wartime by providing assured access to U.S. commercial dry cargo and bulk fuel cargo sealift capacity. Within VISA, the Maritime Security Program (MSP) and within VTA, the Tanker Security Program (TSP) provide fleets of active, commercially viable, militarily useful, privately owned vessels to meet national defense and other security requirements and maintain a United States presence in international commercial shipping.

For organic sealift, USTRANSCOM relies on the Maritime Administration's (MARAD) Ready Reserve Force (RRF), a subset of the National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF). The RRF consists of 52 vessels, including forty-six (46) Roll-on/Roll-off (RO/RO) vessels which provide DOD the ability to surge a sizable land force from the continental United States to any point of need. The RRF also contains four (4) Auxiliary Crane Ships which provide in-stream and austere delivery capabilities and two (2) USMC Aviation Maintenance ships.

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (SOCOM)

Question. In your view, what is the appropriate role of U.S. Special Operations Forces in supporting the implementation of the Joint Warfighting Concept, the Joint Concept for Competing, and the National Defense Strategy?

Answer. Special Operations Forces support the national security objectives of preserving strategic focus; preventing great power conflict; and preparing the environment for the Joint Force to prevail in conflict if deterrence fails. Special Operations Forces are the premier global counterterrorism forces charged with defending the Homeland. Special Operations Forces also play a critical role in global crisis response and securing the safety of American citizens abroad when in extremis situations occur.

Question. Beginning in fiscal year 2017, successive NDAs have empowered the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD(SOLIC)) to serve as a "service secretary-like" civilian official for special operations forces. Among other reforms, the law defines the administrative chain of command for SOCOM as running through the ASD(SOLIC) to the Secretary of Defense for issues impacting the readiness and organization of special operations forces.

What is your understanding of the Department's progress in implementing the "service secretary-like" responsibilities of the ASD(SOLIC)?

Answer. The Department has been making excellent progress in implementing the service secretary-like responsibilities of ASD(SO/LIC) for issues impacting the readiness and organization of special operations forces, resources, equipment, and civilian personnel. The ASD(SO/LIC) fills a critical role in coordinating with Congress and in advocating on behalf of the Special Operations enterprise in areas related to budget, training, and modernization.

Question. If confirmed, would you commit to fully implementing these reforms?

Answer. Yes.

Irregular Warfare

Question. Section 1091 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 expresses the Sense of the Congress that the Secretary of Defense has the authority to conduct irregular warfare operations, including clandestine irregular war-

fare operations, to defend the United States, allies of the United States, and interests of the United States, when such operations have been appropriately authorized.

What is your understanding of the inherent authority of the Secretary of Defense to conduct irregular warfare operations?

Answer. Irregular warfare is a critical tool for the Department to campaign across the spectrum of conflict, enhance interoperability and access, and disrupt competitor warfighting advantages while enhancing our own. As the Department pivots to face the difficult realities of today's strategic environment, it must elevate and expand its use of irregular warfare approaches and tools.

Specifically, with regard to the Secretary of Defense's inherent authority to conduct irregular warfare, there are some very important tools at the Department's disposal, such as USC 10 127d, 127e and 127f. However, given the complexity of the current operating environment, if confirmed, I will work to ensure the Departments Irregular Warfare authorities and supporting processes allow the scope, speed and agility required.

Question. What is your understanding of the role of irregular warfare in supporting Department of Defense strategy and operations?

Answer. Irregular Warfare is a form of warfare where State and non-State actors campaign to assure or coerce states or other groups through indirect, non-attributable or asymmetric activities.

Irregular warfare offers a range of military activities that allow the U.S. to compete with adversaries below the threshold of armed conflict to maximize American influence abroad, illuminate malign activity, deter adversaries from actions most detrimental to our national security and disruptive to the international order, and shape the environment in ways necessary to prevail in conflict, should deterrence fail.

Question. Is the Department of Defense appropriately organized and resourced to effectively operate in the irregular warfare domain? What changes, if any, would you recommend?

Answer. Absent an institutionalized approach to irregular warfare, the DOD will remain underprepared for the enduring requirements of irregular war, and not postured to employ irregular warfare capabilities proactively to compete, deter, and win across the spectrum of competition and conflict. The Joint Force continues to institutionalize irregular warfare as a core competency. However, irregular warfare campaigning against State adversaries requires a whole of government approach and the DOD has room to improve interagency planning, coordination, and synchronization in the irregular warfare space against peer and near peer adversaries. There are solid lessons to be learned from how the Department worked with the interagency in the counterterrorism space during the Global War on Terror.

Authorities

Question. Section 127e of title 10, U.S. Code, authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide support (including training, funding, and equipment) to regular forces, irregular forces, and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations for the purpose of combatting terrorism. Section 127d of title 10, U.S. Code, authorizes U.S. special operations forces to provide similar support to forces or individuals supporting or facilitating irregular warfare operations.

What is your assessment of the national security utility of each of these authorities in the current strategic environment?

Answer. Those authorities allow the Department to conduct counterterrorism or irregular warfare activities by, with, and through foreign forces, irregular forces, groups, or individuals since they often have access and placement to adversary operating areas that U.S. forces lack. DOD expends funds to support partner forces as they in turn lend their support to achieving the objectives of the United States' military. By expending relatively small amounts of funding, combined with advice and assistance from U.S. military forces, the Department use these local forces to protect the U.S. Homeland and Americans abroad by maintaining continuous pressure on strategic competitors and terrorists.

Question. If confirmed, what criteria would you apply to the evaluation of proposals for the use of each of these authorities, with a view to mitigating the risks associated with the conduct of counterterrorism and irregular warfare activities below the level of traditional armed conflict?

Answer. If confirmed, I would confirm partners are trustworthy and reliable, using SOCOMs proven screening and vetting standards and processes. Choosing the right partners is the best way to ensure compliance with Law of Armed Conflict principles, proper expenditure of funds, and accountability of defense articles.

Nuclear Policy

Question. United States nuclear forces are the bedrock of our Nation's defense, underpin our most critical alliances, and have deterred nuclear aggression and great power conflict for more than 70 years. Unfortunately, long deferred investments have left us with systems nearing the end of their useful lives. These capabilities must be updated to maintain a viable nuclear deterrent.

Do you agree with Secretary Hegseth and 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. The U.S. nuclear triad, consisting of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), nuclear-capable bombers, and ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), remains the backbone of the Nation's strategic deterrent. It should remain DOD's top priority mission to ensure we retain a modern, capable, and effective nuclear deterrent.

Question. What is your understanding of how Russia, China, and North Korea have expanded and/or modernized their nuclear force capabilities? In your view, do these capabilities pose an increasing threat to the United States and its allies?

Answer. Over the next decade, China likely will continue to rapidly modernize, diversify, and expand its nuclear forces. The PLA seeks a larger and more diverse nuclear force, comprised of systems ranging from low-yield precision strike missiles to ICBMs with multi-megaton yields to provide it options at every rung of the escalation ladder. DOD estimates China has surpassed 600 operational nuclear warheads in its stockpile as of 2024.

Russia is nearing the completion of the current round of modernization of its strategic nuclear forces, and has successfully introduced new ICBMs, ballistic missile submarines, and long-range ALCMs. Russia is adding new military capabilities to its large stockpile of nonstrategic nuclear weapons (NSNWs), including those employable by ships, aircraft, and ground forces. Russia holds the largest foreign nuclear stockpile in the world and maintains approximately 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads on ICBMs, SLBMs, and long-range heavy bombers. Moscow also retains roughly 2,000 NSNW to include ASMs, SRBMs, gravity bombs, torpedoes, anti-ship, anti-submarine, and anti-aircraft missiles.

Under Kim Jong-un, the DPRK has improved its ability to hold the U.S. and its allies at risk with its missile and nuclear capabilities. In 2021, KJU announced a 5-year defense development plan, which included improving its ballistic missile capabilities and developing new nuclear warheads. Pyongyang has also vowed to "exponentially increase" Pyongyang's nuclear weapons stockpile. The DPRK has made notable progress on missile-related goals, such as testing claimed solid-propellant ICBM and hypersonic systems and unveiling a new "tactical" nuclear warhead. During some of its missile testing, the DPRK has also claimed to simulate tactical nuclear exercises. Pyongyang's cooperation with Moscow may also provide opportunities for the DPRK to advance its missile capabilities, as the DPRK has provided ballistic missiles to Russia that have been employed against Ukraine—the first time these DPRK systems have been used in combat.

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

Answer. I am aware of the findings of the recent bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission that our nuclear forces are necessary, but not sufficient. The threat continues to grow while our weapons have remained largely static for decades. While I have confidence in the lethality of the Joint Force, it is incumbent on the Department to understand options, which includes potential for new capabilities and/or a larger force. If confirmed, I will assess the current deterrence policy and force posture and work with the professionals across the Department to ensure we can adequately deter two nuclear peers in the future.

Question. What is your understanding of the role of nuclear weapons and the importance of nuclear deterrence to U.S. national security and the defense of allies?

Answer. Our nuclear forces undergird all our defense priorities, and it remains indispensable to our national security. In a dynamic security environment, a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent underpins our broader U.S. defense strategy and the extended deterrence commitments we have made to allies and partners.

Question. What are your views on deterrence now that the United States is facing the prospect of simultaneously deterring two nuclear-armed peer competitors in Russia and China?

Answer. We are facing increasing nuclear competition with Russia and the pace and scope of China's nuclear expansion will present new strategic dilemmas requiring increased focus on the DOD's ability to modernize our strategic deterrence capability. This starts with maintaining credible and effective U.S. nuclear forces as the bedrock of our deterrence against potential aggression from both Russia and China. Not only must the United States aggressively modernize its nuclear capability, but we must pursue initiatives like the President's Golden Dome Executive Order to render any act of aggression against the United States Homeland ineffective.

Question. What is your understanding of how Russia and China have expanded and modernized their nuclear force capabilities?

Answer. Over the next decade, China is likely to continue to rapidly modernize, diversify, and expand its nuclear forces. The PLA seeks a larger and more diverse nuclear force, comprised of systems ranging from low-yield precision strike missiles to ICBMs with multi-megaton yields to provide it options at every rung of the escalation ladder. DOD estimates China has surpassed 600 operational nuclear warheads in its stockpile as of 2024.

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Question. In your view, do these capabilities pose an increasing threat to the United States and its allies?

Answer. China probably is developing advanced nuclear delivery systems, in part due to long-term concerns about U.S. missile defense capabilities. The PLA's expanding nuclear force will enable it to target more U.S. cities, military facilities, and leadership sites than ever before in a potential nuclear conflict. Additionally, the PLA's H-6N bomber, when armed with a nuclear-capable ALBM, likely can conduct nuclear precision strikes against targets in the Indo-Pacific theater.

Moscow will continue to emphasize nuclear weapons in its national strategy, while building new delivery systems and modernizing its nuclear stockpile, primarily by replacing Soviet-legacy non-strategic nuclear weapons with new weapons and new capabilities. The escalation of conflict with Ukraine and Russia's suspension of the New START Treaty represents two key areas of continuing risk.

Question. Do you believe Russia has or is willing to employ nuclear coercion as a means of advancing its military and foreign policy goals?

Answer. I have no reason to doubt Moscow has employed nuclear coercion including nuclear exercises, senior leader statements on Russia's nuclear capabilities and use calculus, and participation in strategic arms control agreements to respond to perceived Western aggression and deter future Western activity Moscow assesses is counter to Russian interests. For example, since 2022, Russia has updated its public nuclear doctrine to expand nuclear use cases, deployed some non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) to Belarus, de-ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and conducted its first-ever NSNW exercise with Belarusian forces. During the same time, Moscow repeatedly warned the West about crossing Russian "red lines", for example by providing advanced weapons to Ukraine, and emphasized Russia retained the right and capability to use nuclear forces to defend against a Western attack.

Question. Do you agree with DOD's assessment that China intends to double or triple the size of its nuclear arsenal over the next decade?

Answer. DoD estimates China has surpassed 600 operational nuclear warheads in its stockpile as of 2024 and will have over 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030, much of which will be deployed at higher readiness levels. I expect China to continue growing its force through 2035 in line with its goal of ensuring PLA modernization is "basically complete" that year, an important milestone on the road to Xi's goal of a "world class" military by 2049.

Question. Do you believe that as China completes its build out of a triad of delivery platforms it will adhere to the full meaning of "no first use"?

Answer. The PRC has long maintained a "no first use" policy. However, that is what we have repeatedly called on China to explain how its NFU nuclear doctrine is consistent with its non-transparent but well-documented, rapid nuclear arsenal buildup. China has refused to seriously engage on these questions bilaterally, through the P5, or in multilateral disarmament fora. Absent answers to these con-

crete questions, we must conclude that China's rhetorical, unverifiable NFU policy is not credible.

Question. Do you believe U.S. extended nuclear deterrence assurances are effective in reassuring allies that they do not need to pursue their own nuclear arsenals to ensure their national security?

Answer. I recognize our allies' concerns about adversary nuclear threats and attempts to weaken our alliances for their own strategic advantages. I believe we should make every effort to reinforce our extended deterrence commitments, and that these commitments enhance the safety and security of the American people. Furthermore, our extended deterrence contributes to nuclear nonproliferation.

Question. Do you believe that the risk of nuclear proliferation will increase if U.S. allies lose confidence in our extended nuclear deterrence assurances?

Answer. It is imperative that we maintain allied confidence in our nuclear umbrella both to assure our allies and to dissuade adversaries from attempting to coerce our partners around the globe.

Question. What is your understanding of the State of U.S. nuclear forces, its global nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) architecture, and the supporting weapons sustainment and production capabilities within the National Nuclear Security Administration?

Answer. Although our nuclear forces and existing NC3 architecture are safe, secure, and effective today, we have greatly exceeded their intended design life, and they are showing their age. Deferred modernization has removed margin and there is no longer room for delay. This is further challenged by atrophy in both the DOD industrial base for nuclear delivery platforms and National Nuclear Security Administration production capabilities and infrastructure.

Question. 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. The three legs of the triad each serve an important and distinct purpose and offer unique but mutually reinforcing attributes. All three legs are needed to preserve deterrence in the face of growing adversarial threats.

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

Answer. The current United States nuclear force was designed in a different security environment. I understand the Strategic Posture Commission concluded that the current program of record is necessary but not sufficient. If confirmed, I intend to consult with key Department stakeholders to assess the risks, implications, and benefits of pursuing additional capabilities to address any modernization insufficiency and ensure our nuclear deterrence remains credible and effective.

Question. Senior Service leaders and several Combatant Commanders have stated that they support the continued development of a nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile as a means of addressing Russia's advantages in theater-range nuclear weapons, managing escalation in a potential conflict with China, and enhancing assurance to U.S. allies. Do you agree with these views?

Answer. Yes. A nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N) is one capability that will help address regional deterrence challenges in the face of China and Russia's rapid theater nuclear force modernization, while assuring allies and partners. Additionally, I believe it is important to work within the Joint Staff and Inter-agency to assess other supplemental theater nuclear options as suggested by the 2023 Strategic Posture Commission.

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

Answer. The Department must implement a risk-management strategy to identify, prioritize, and recommend actions across the portfolio of nuclear programs. This is essential for maintaining the overall health of the nuclear deterrent as the DOD sustains current capabilities and transition to modernized systems.

Question. Successive Nuclear Posture Reviews have concluded that the adoption of a nuclear "No First Use" (NFU) or Sole policy by the United States is not advisable.

Do you believe a NFU policy would be appropriate for the United States, and what do you believe would be the implications of such a policy on the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence commitments to our allies?

Answer. I do not support a nuclear "No First Use" or "Sole Purpose" policy for the United States. I believe such a policy would result in an unacceptable level of risk.

Question. The NNSA is responsible for maintaining the Nation's nuclear weapons stockpile and meeting military requirements for nuclear weapons, which are established through the interagency NWC. NNSA's principal challenge over the next 20 years is to rebuild the cold war-era U.S. nuclear weapons infrastructure into a responsive and resilient enterprise.

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

Answer. Yes. Recapitalization is necessary to ensure delivery of the program of record and sustain an effective force into the future.

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

Answer. Yes. Our collaboration with the UK is mutually beneficial and serves U.S. nuclear interests.

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

Answer. Yes, the rigorous Stockpile Stewardship Program has developed the computational and experimental tools needed to certify the current stockpile without the need for full-scale nuclear weapons testing. Continued support for the National Laboratories is crucial for the viability of the Stockpile Stewardship mission.

Question. Do you perceive utility in the work of the Council on Oversight of the National Leadership Command, Control, and Communications System? Please explain your answer.

Answer. Yes, there is utility in the work of the Council and its various governance forums. The establishment of the Council ensures oversight of a diverse and complicated system of systems. The utility lies in unifying efforts across the Department for sustaining and modernizing NC3, senior leader communications, nuclear command and control, and continuity of government communications.

Arms Control

Question. What are your views of the New START Treaty, taking into account Russia's recent actions to suspend participation in the Treaty?

Answer. I understand that Russia remains in violation of its obligations under the New START Treaty as a result of its suspension. As a result, both sides have ceased implementation of the New START Treaty's verification mechanisms, and the United States is unable to confirm that Russia is abiding by all the Treaty's limits.

Question. What do you see as the major challenges for negotiating future treaties with Russia and China, and would you support U.S. participation in such a negotiation?

Answer. I support diplomacy that contributes to national security, particularly any efforts toward an agreement capturing the full scope of Russia and China's nuclear capabilities. Most importantly, our national security depends on verifiable agreements.

Question. What are your views on the asymmetry in the number of non-strategic weapons between Russia and the United States and should they be accounted for in any follow-on treaty?

Answer. I am concerned by Russia's approximately 2,000 non-strategic nuclear weapons that are not numerically constrained by any arms control treaty. Future arms control engagements with Moscow, if they are initiated, should take these forces into careful and serious account.

Question. What are your views of missile defense and nuclear arms control with either Russia or China?

Answer. The increasing capabilities of peer and near-peer nuclear states demonstrates the importance of the President's Golden Dome initiative. As important and if not more so, the United States will continue to rely on strategic deterrence—underwritten by a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal—to address and deter large intercontinental range, nuclear capable missile threats to the Homeland from Russia and China.

Question. In your assessment, how would delaying or canceling current nuclear modernization plans and programs affect our arms control negotiation leverage with near-peer and peer competitors?

Answer. Delaying or canceling current nuclear modernization plans and programs on a unilateral basis would reduce our strategic deterrence and arms control leverage with Russia and China.

Question. What do you see as the major challenges for any nuclear risk reduction or arms control negotiations with China?

Answer. China continues to deny its nuclear buildup and reject calls for even modest nuclear risk reduction measures. China needs to be more transparent about

its nuclear forces. Any agreement with China must first enhance U.S. national security and second be verifiable.

Missile Defense

Question. The United States enjoys a measure of protection against ballistic missile threats from rogue nations like North Korea and Iran, but the threat from Russian and Chinese ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missiles against U.S. forces, allies, and the U.S. Homeland continues to grow. However, in an executive order, the President has directed the development of a comprehensive national missile defense architecture to counter all types of missile threats.

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

Answer. U.S. nuclear weapons undergird all defense priorities: deterring nuclear and non-nuclear strategic attack, assuring our allies and partners, and enabling achievement of Presidential objectives if deterrence fails. We rely on a whole-of-government effort to defeat missile technology of all adversaries while raising the threshold of escalation by maintaining a credible kinetic defense. A comprehensive missile defeat and the U.S. nuclear arsenal are complementary and mutually reinforcing, they are essential for deterring an attack against the U.S. or our Allies and partners.

Question. If confirmed as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, what would be your priorities for U.S. missile defense capabilities for the Homeland?

Answer. If confirmed, my priorities would be aligned with those set by the President's Golden Dome Executive Order. My priority is to ensure the deployment of a next-generation missile shield to provide for the common defense of our citizens and the Nation. Protecting the Homeland from an adversary ICBM attack, the Ground-Based Midcourse-Defense system contributes directly to the U.S. deterrent strategies for rogue State ICBM threats to the Homeland and would defend against an ICBM attack. My second priority is to deter—and defend our citizens and critical infrastructure against—any foreign aerial attack on the Homeland leveraging modern and future missile defense technology combined with a robust proliferated space-based architecture that provides early warning and missile tracking.

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

Answer. I understand the current fleet of Ground-based Interceptors (GBIs) is adequate against the existing North Korean threat, and our planned upgrade to the Next Generation Interceptor and modest increase to the number of interceptors in the fleet is currently sufficient to defeat a limited attack. If confirmed, I will support continuing annual reviews to assess any required changes to U.S. Homeland missile defense systems.

Question. In your view, do you believe missile defense policy should be limited to countering only rogue nations, such as North Korea and Iran?

Answer. I support the Administration's Golden Dome Executive Order which states that the United States will develop missile defenses against aerial attacks against the Homeland by peer, near-peer, and rogue adversaries.

Question. If so, what role do you believe integrated air and missile defenses should play in defending limited areas and defeating smaller scale cruise or hypersonic glide missile attacks by larger threats, such as Russia and China?

Answer. Integrated air and missile defense of the Homeland is vital to our resiliency at home and to our ability to project power abroad. The Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and NORTHCOM have been working on a comprehensive plan to strengthen our Homeland defense against air and missile threats in the continental United States, Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam. If confirmed, I will support development of active and passive defenses against regional hypersonic missile threats and pursue a persistent and resilient sensor network to track all hypersonic threats, improve attribution, and enable engagement.

Question. Do you support the Next Generation Interceptor?

Answer. I support improving the capability and reliability of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system, which currently includes development of the Next Generation Interceptor to augment and potentially replace the existing Ground-Based Interceptors.

Question. Do you support the Next Generation Interceptor eventually replacing the existing 44 ground based interceptors?

Answer. I support improving the capability and reliability of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system, which currently includes development of the Next Generation Interceptor to augment and potentially replace the existing Ground-Based Interceptors.

Question. What are your views on the advisability of building a second Homeland missile defense site on the eastern coast of the United States?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to evaluating this requirement and providing my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

Question. What is your understanding of U.S. capabilities for defending against maneuvering hypersonic glide vehicles?

Answer. Maneuvering missiles, such as hypersonic glide vehicles (HGV), present a challenge to existing defensive systems because they can travel on unpredictable flight paths at low altitudes making them difficult to track using standard terrestrial radar systems. If confirmed, I will continue to seek out kinetic and non-kinetic solutions to defeat hypersonic threats that create cost imposition for adversaries.

Question. The Missile Defense Agency has previously indicated that the Glide Phase Interceptor program for hypersonic defense would not reach initial operational capability until after 2035. Do you believe this timeline is sufficient to meet current and anticipated hypersonic threats?

Answer. No. If confirmed, I will evaluate this timeline and provide my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

Question. Do you support a space-based sensor layer for improved tracking and targeting of advanced threats such as hypersonic missiles?

Answer. Yes. Space-based sensor layer investments continue to improve our ability to monitor launch sites and detect launches from locations almost anywhere on the globe. Coupled with new technologies for data processing at the edge of the network, AI/ML, and mesh communications capabilities, space-based sensors provide unique insight required to identify and respond within the short timelines necessary to defeat advanced threats such as hypersonic missiles.

Question. What are your views on the efficacy of boost-phase intercept and space-based intercept or directed energy programs?

Answer. I assess that the efficacy of boost-phase intercept, space-based intercept and directed energy programs is still an open question. While these concepts have great potential, if confirmed, I will explore how best resolve the challenges associated with developing and fielding these capabilities and provide my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

Question. In your opinion, has DOD developed and implemented operational concepts, plans, and policies appropriate to the governance and utilization of such programs? What would you do to address this issue, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will remain involved in operational discussions with senior Department leadership to ensure a thorough examination of these operational concepts, plans and policies, and their governance processes.

Question. The United States is currently developing a missile defense architecture to better support the protection of U.S. citizens and forces on Guam, however this effort has been plagued by uneven funding and an unclear management structure for aligning the various lines of effort. What is your understanding of the status of this effort, and its operational importance to the U.S. in the Western Pacific?

Answer. Guam is both an unequivocal part of the U.S. Homeland as well as a vital regional operational hub. The protection of this U.S. territory is critical to the U.S. National Defense Strategy. I am aware that the Department is focused on increasing its missile defense capabilities on the island as part of efforts to strengthen deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will continue to advocate for unity of effort and progress on the Guam Defense System.

Electronic Warfare and Spectrum Operations

Question. Has DOD adequately integrated electronic warfare into its joint concepts and operational plans?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the Department's integration of electronic warfare into joint concepts and operational plans.

Question. What major issues attend the United States' conduct of joint electronic warfare operations, especially at the relevant combatant commands?

Answer. The United States is facing a variety of challenges when considering joint EW operations, which begin with access to the spectrum itself. Additionally, the Department must balance investment in exquisite capabilities with investment in systems that are inexpensive and can be produced at scale. Other factors include leveraging artificial intelligence, deepening the Joint Force's knowledge through training and education on Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations, and working across the whole-of-government to evolve laws and regulations on the use of the EMSO internally and externally to the United States. DOD spectrum access is critical for EMSO to protect the Homeland and the military's ability to conduct its missions. Combatant commands need spectrum to increase lethality, restore deterrence,

win wars, and achieve Presidential priorities, such as Golden Dome for America and Border Security.

Question. Do you support a Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Center at U.S. Strategic Command?

Answer. Capability to maintain advantage in the electromagnetic spectrum across the entire Joint Force will be necessary to win future wars. The Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Center (JEMSOC) at USSTRATCOM has filled a key gap in Joint Force capabilities by preparing the U.S. military for the complexities of the electromagnetic spectrum. The JEMSOC facilitates realistic joint training, equipping warfighters with the skills and knowledge to dominate this increasingly contested domain by centralizing expertise and resources. This centralized approach ensures consistent implementation of national EMS strategy and fosters a force ready to achieve electromagnetic superiority.

Question. Does the DOD adequately conduct joint Tier One exercises utilizing adversary level electronic warfare?

Answer. The Joint Force faces significant challenges in conducting effective Tier One exercises that accurately portray adversary electronic warfare capabilities. Current model and simulation capabilities used in these exercises are inadequate, relying on human modelers to subjectively assess and apply the effects of friendly and enemy electronic warfare on units in the simulation. The Joint Force's ability to operate effectively in the electromagnetic spectrum is crucial to deterring and winning future engagements, and it is essential that Tier One joint exercises prioritize this task. A recent study by the Office of the Secretary of Defense found the Department of Defense lacks access to adequate live, virtual, constructive or synthetic advanced threat systems and environments that can be easily integrated into existing training programs. This shortfall poses a significant risk to Joint Force readiness and its ability to operate in future engagements, highlighting the need for improved modeling and simulation capabilities and increased attention to training on electronic warfare.

Question. What is your opinion of training ranges for electronic warfare?

Answer. The current State of training ranges for electromagnetic warfare is inadequate. Despite some investments, these ranges have not kept pace with current technology or the threat environments in which we expect to fight. These ranges often fail to provide the necessary fidelity, capacity, and complexity required to prepare forces for modern electromagnetic warfare threats.

Question. Do you believe our systems are adequately protected from adversary electronic attack?

Answer. No. Against the most advanced adversaries, the Joint Force would likely face challenges protecting itself from electromagnetic attack. Two factors contribute to these challenges: 1) Over the past few decades, the Joint Force has lost some muscle memory defending against electromagnetic attack by conducting operations within a permissive electromagnetic spectrum. 2) Over the same period, operations within this spectrum have changed significantly while the most advanced adversaries have done their best to rapidly evolve. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that DOD continues to invest in training and additional capabilities in the electromagnetic spectrum.

Question. Does DOD have adequate simulation capability to experiment with and test joint electronic warfare concepts, in your view?

Answer. No. The DOD's simulation capabilities for electromagnetic warfare are insufficient. Although facilities like the Air Force Electronic Warfare Evaluation Simulator (AFEWES) and the Joint Simulation Environment (JSE) exist, they are not fully integrated with other systems and lack sufficient capacity to fully develop new joint electromagnetic warfare concepts. These gaps hamper the Joint Force's ability to experiment with and refine concepts in this area, leaving us vulnerable to emerging threats.

Question. Spectrum is a vital asset in the conduct of electronic warfare—what is your opinion on the DOD use of the S band for spectrum operations and potential impacts on its loss—please be specific in citing examples.

Answer. The S band (2–4 GHz) is a critical frequency range for various DOD systems, including radar, electromagnetic warfare (EW) systems. The DOD's use of the S band for spectrum operations is essential for maintaining operational advantage, and its loss or disruption could have significant impacts on military effectiveness affecting the defense of the Homeland from strategic and missile attack.

For example, the loss of S band spectrum could impact the performance of the Navy's Aegis Combat System, which relies on S band radar to detect and engage airborne targets. Similarly, the loss of S band spectrum could disrupt the operation of the Army's Patriot air defense system, which uses S band radar to detect and track incoming missiles. Furthermore, the loss of S band spectrum could also impact

the DOD's ability to conduct electronic warfare operations, as many EW systems, such as the Navy's SLQ-32 and the Air Force's ALQ-211, rely on S band spectrum to detect and disrupt enemy radar and communication systems.

SECURITY COOPERATION AND ARMS TRANSFERS

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you recommend, if any, to ensure that the Department of Defense is taking a strategic approach to its security cooperation with allies and partners?

Answer. Capable partners offer one of the strongest strategic offsets the U.S. can employ. Security cooperation—whether arms sales, training, or other forms of capacity building—enhance the partner's ability to handle security challenges before they reach the threshold of threatening U.S. vital interests. But a partner's ability is only part of the calculus; their willingness to handle those challenges is equally, if not more, important. Because of this, security cooperation initiatives must focus on partners with shared interests that can feasibly translate U.S. security cooperation activities into legitimate capabilities. If confirmed, I will ensure that security cooperation activities remain tightly tethered to U.S. national interests and focus on partners who meet those criteria. If confirmed and I re-enter active service, I intend to look at increased use of the National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP).

Question. What is your understanding of DOD's role in the foreign military sales and arms transfer process? In your view, what are the greatest challenges for DOD in fulfilling this role in a timely and effective manner?

Answer. For Foreign Military Sales, the role of the Department of Defense (DoD) is to effectively execute programs in coordination with other government agencies while promoting stronger international defense relationships and greater military interoperability. The most significant challenges are timely deliveries to allies and partners. Both capacity limitations in the Defense Industrial Base as well as the bureaucratic processes and policies that govern FMS contribute to that timeliness. I understand, in 2024, the DOD implemented a Continuous Process Improvement Board for the FMS process. If confirmed as Chairman, I will work aggressively with the Department to improve processes and reduce administrative burdens to improve the timeliness of FMS implementation, along with relentless advocacy to strengthen the Defense Industrial Base to more rapidly respond to customer needs—both domestically and the Nation's partners.

Question. Is DOD appropriately organized, trained, and resourced to execute security cooperation and foreign military sales effectively? If not, and if confirmed, what changes to defense security assistance organizations, training, and processes would you recommend?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense to review security cooperation organizations, training, and processes and make my recommendations.

CONTESTED LOGISTICS

Question. Who do you believe acts as the lead for contested logistics in how both efficiencies are created and executed to support the National Defense Strategy?

Answer. Currently, the Joint Staff works with the Combatant Commanders to define requirements and identify the risks associated with a contested logistics environment. Additionally, the Joint Staff works with the Services through the Joint Logistics Board to align their investments in infrastructure, force design, and posture to prepare the Joint Logistics Enterprise to deploy and sustain joint warfighters in a contested environment.

Question. Do you believe the Department of Defense needs to identify a single service or entity to act as the global contested logistics manager?

Answer. The Joint Staff works with the Services to align their investments in infrastructure, force design, and posture, and supports the Combatant Commanders as they engage with allies and partners. If confirmed, I will continue to assess any changes in how global logistics is managed. If changes are required, I will advise the President, SecDef, and Congress on any authorities that may require change.

Question. What is your current assessment for how the Department of Defense views contested logistics when it comes to both war games and operational planning?

Answer. The Joint Warfighting Concept and supporting concepts have focused the Department's attention on the contested logistics problem set. Logistics was once considered an enabling function. However, it has always been one of the six warfighting functions ... and now it is clearly a pacing function. All analytic and experimentation efforts must be logistics-informed, since the ability to sustain the force underwrites everything else.

COOPERATIVE THREAT REDUCTION (CTR) PROGRAM

Question. The CTR Program, which has focused historically on accounting for, securing, and eliminating cold war era weapons of mass destruction and materials in the states of the former Soviet Union, has expanded its focus to other countries. In addition, the CTR Program is widening its focus to biological weapons and capabilities, including biological surveillance and early warning, and encouraging the development of capabilities to reduce proliferation threats as well as working with host nations to secure stockpiles of dangerous pathogens at their high containment laboratories.

What are your views on the efficacy of the CTR Program?

Answer. Over the years, the CTR Program has detected, secured, and eliminated Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) at their source, before they can threaten the Homeland or the Joint Force. In line with the Secretary's priorities, the CTR Program protects Joint Force readiness and lethality by providing indicators and warnings of chemical, biological, and nuclear threats. It remains a vital tool in layered defense against WMD threats.

Notwithstanding the use and proliferation of chemical weapons documented recently in Libya and Syria, about 60 percent of CTR resources are allocated to biological programs.

Question. Do you believe this shift in focus to biological programs accurately reflects the current threat?

Answer. Yes. The Department's Biodefense Posture Review documented that biological threats to the Joint Force have increased. The use of biological weapons by State or nonState actors presents a significant challenge to national security. Emerging technologies could further enable potential adversaries to use biological weapons in new and novel ways. Eliminating biological threats is a key mission for the CTR program.

Biological threats could affect the readiness and lethality of the Joint Force and the security of the Homeland. Increasingly, adversaries seek to develop and use biological weapons that would evade existing capabilities for detection, attribution, or treatment. Eliminating these threats will continue to be an important mission for the CTR Program, but I support reviewing current prioritization to ensure the program addresses the most urgent WMD threats.

Question. If confirmed, specifically what would you recommend to ensure the CTR program is capable of meeting its mission to roll back the threat of weapons of mass destruction?

Answer. If confirmed, I would advocate for a thorough review and cost-benefit analysis of the CTR Program to ensure activities fully support its congressionally authorized countering WMD mission and contribute to a lethal and effective fighting force.

DOD AUDITABILITY

Question. The Department of Defense has invested significant effort and dollars in preparing its financial information for annual audit reviews. However, the 2024 DOD-wide financial audit again resulted in a disclaimer of opinion.

If confirmed, what specific actions would you take or direct to improve DOD auditability?

Answer. If confirmed, I will demonstrate a consistent and informed commitment to achieving an unmodified audit opinion by setting the "tone from the top" by highlighting the importance of financial accountability and transparency within the Department. Setting expectations, holding senior leadership accountable, visibly messaging the importance of financial management and audit process adherence sends a clear message throughout the Department. I can emphasize financial integrity and accountability to encourage a culture where those values are prioritized across the Joint Force.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to instill responsibility for audit progress among command leadership, and not just default to a financial management community?

Answer. Maintaining transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency is key to improving auditability. These are cornerstones to successful military operations, and auditability of the Department's accounts is a military mission. If confirmed, I will work with the Department to ensure that auditability is integrated in the overall command structure of the constituent services, establishing clear roles and responsibilities related to financial management, ensuring the emphasis on auditability is pervasive from the most senior roles and commands to the most junior.

Question. U.S. superiority in key areas of innovation is decreasing or has disappeared, while our competitors are engaging in aggressive military modernization and advanced weaponry development. DOD has identified 14 critical technology areas in which investment to develop next generation operational capabilities is imperative. These areas include: hypersonics; future generation wireless technology; advanced materials; integrated network systems-of-systems; directed energy; integrated sensing and cyber; space technology; quantum science; trusted artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomy; microelectronics; renewable energy generation and storage; advanced computing and software; human-machine interfaces; and biotechnology. Much of the innovation in these technologies that could prove suitable for national defense purposes is occurring outside of the traditional defense industry.

What do you see as the most significant challenges (e.g., technical, organizational, or cultural) to DOD's development of these key technologies, or gaining access to such technologies from the commercial marketplace?

Answer. DOD must aggressively take steps to illustrate how these innovative technologies are conceptually employed. Through this analysis process, the Joint Staff and military departments can define future requirements. This will provide industry clear DOD demand signals.

The United States commercial marketplace is teaming with innovative solutions for defending the United States. The most significant challenge is getting these innovative solutions into the Force. The Department must work to exploit these solutions via rapid prototyping programs, defense innovation organizations, and congressionally granted authorities.

The Department must grow the capacity of the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) and expand the defense ecosystem through investments that promote resilient supply chains, workforce readiness, closer collaboration with commercial industry, flexible acquisition, and mutual support with Allies and partners. The Joint Force should re-evaluate its interactions with industry and fight for access to the commercial space, leveraging organizations like the Defense Innovation Unit. The Department can collaborate with the DIB to adopt a whole of nation approach to delivering capability and maximize economy of scale. The DIB will grow and evolve if it receives the proper demand signals from the Joint Force. The Department can do a better job at that.

The 14 critical technology areas cover a wide range of disciplines with inherent developmental challenges. A significant common challenge that affects all critical technology areas are the force development implications for the warfighters that will employ them. We must ensure that the organizations and people of the DOD are trained and ready to use capabilities in these 14 critical technology areas to their maximum potential and deliver peace through strength.

Question. How well do you think DOD investments in these technologies are appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all Military Departments and Agencies?

Answer. There continues to be room for improvement in this area. If confirmed, I'll work with Secretary Hegseth and his team as the Department continues to evaluate these technologies and other aspects of the defense budget in order to provide the Joint Force with the tools they need to defend the Nation.

Question. In addition to the technologies identified in the 2022 National Defense Strategy, are there other technology areas in which you believe DOD must invest to ensure that the United States maintains its technological superiority in the long-term?

Answer. The 2022 National Defense Strategy provides a suitable list of critical technology areas, but I believe the DOD must also invest in advanced manufacturing technology. Investments in advanced manufacturing will have impacts across the listed 14 critical technology areas and enable the United States to produce complex components and systems more quickly and cost effectively. If confirmed, I'll work with Secretary Hegseth to refine the development and acquisition of these technologies in order to enable rapid employment to meet the needs of the Joint Warfighter to fulfill the Administration's strategy.

Question. What efforts is DOD making to identify new technologies developed commercially by the private sector and apply them to national security and warfighter purposes?

Answer. The Joint Staff has been heavily engaged in DOD Innovation programs such as Replicator, the Rapid Defense Experimentation Reserve (RDER), Warfighting Lab Incentive Fund (WLIF), etc . . . that focus on identifying commercial technologies and expediting them into the hands of the Warfighter.

Recently, the Joint Staff has revamped capability portfolio management, creating a new approach to drive strategic alignment across requirements, acquisition, and R&D. The Joint Staff has partnered with the offices of the undersecretaries for Acquisitions and Sustainment, and Research and Engineering to create a holistic portfolio view of capability development. This effort allows warfighters producing capability requirements to be fully informed of new technologies and commercially developed products that may fill requirements and capability gaps identified by the Joint Force.

Question. One of the main objectives of the defense research enterprise is to develop advanced technologies that will be of benefit to the warfighter. In this regard, it is critical that technologies quickly transition from the development phase into testing and evaluation and ultimately into a program of record for the deployment of capability to the warfighter.

What are the challenges you perceive to effectively transitioning technologies from research programs into programs of record or deployed capabilities?

Answer. Effectively transitioning technologies from research programs into programs of record or deployed capabilities is challenging because of the time it takes to mature a technology into a viable prototype for experimentation and concepts of operation development. Over time, changing priorities within the DOD can shift focus away from early investments, losing sight of work done to date.

Funding to support the implementation of promising capabilities is not protected in budgets. Budgetary constraints and the impacts of Continuing Resolutions (CR) add challenges for transitioning programs. Some technologies may not mature in time to be integrated into programs, while others may mature more rapidly than the existing budget cycle can accommodate. DOD also must quickly become a better buyer. The DOD is frankly a poor buyer and must devote energy to this effort.

Question. How can the operational experience of the warfighter better be integrated into the research and development process? Are there appropriate places to interject warfighters in the interaction between the DOD research and engineering community and the private sector?

Answer. Frequent vector checks with potential end-users are essential to ensuring that technology innovation meets warfighter needs. Additionally, creating opportunities for the research and development community to present potential solutions and exchange ideas with warfighters about innovative employment options enriches both communities. Using the Joint Warfighting Concept to inform the selection and prioritization of R&D projects facilitates stronger alignment with warfighting needs from the onset. Engagements to introduce concept frameworks to the broader research and engineering community, to include industry, academia, labs, defense innovation entities, allies, and partners, has the potential to influence their respective internal investment strategies to help accelerate development of needed capabilities. Frequent vector checks with potential end-users to reinforce alignment to warfighting needs is essential if it is not distracting or oversaturating the units at the tactical edge. Additionally, creating opportunities for the R&D community to present potential solutions and exchange ideas with warfighters about innovative employment options enriches both communities.

Question. If confirmed as Chairman, what specific steps would you take to ensure that the warfighter is benefiting more quickly and directly from research being performed across the defense research enterprise?

Answer. A lot of work has been done but the DOD must stop confusing work with results. The U.S. faces a rapidly evolving security environment; therefore, it is imperative that the DOD speed the transition of advanced technologies to benefit the warfighters more swiftly and effectively. If confirmed, I will prioritize efforts to ensure that defense research translates into operational capabilities for the forces to meet warfighter needs.

I will enhance focus on programs that involve warfighters in the research process to ensure their operational experience informs decisionmaking and technology development. This approach helps keep solutions grounded in the real-world challenges faced by troops and fosters a culture of collaboration among warfighters and technologists.

I will ensure full support for efforts to close capability gaps in joint warfighting concepts and share data across the DOD, such as the recent Joint Experimentation Forum (JEF). Events like these gather personnel from combatant commands, military services, federally funded research centers, industry partners, and university-affiliated research centers for collaborative discussions to share valuable insights that will inform experimentation guidance across the defense enterprise. Continued engagement with key innovators such as the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) will be the key to success.

By actively engaging warfighters in the research process, leveraging collaborative forums, and fostering relationships with key defense agencies, I am committed to breaking down barriers and facilitating open dialog among stakeholders. This approach will enable the timely transition of critical capabilities into the hands of the Joint Force, ensuring that the military remains at the forefront of innovation and prepared to outpace evolving threats.

Question. If confirmed, what would you do to increase the interaction between DOD labs and the private sector, and between DOD labs and the rest of the DOD innovation enterprise to include the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, the Strategic Capabilities Office, the Defense Innovation Unit, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency?

Answer. There is a lot of good work going on, but I do have some concerns that innovation entities are actually colliding with each other in the incubation process. The DOD must have a greater level of collaboration between entities in order to maximize the return on the USG's invested capital. If confirmed, I would continue to build on the integration of the DOD labs with OSD R&E, SCO, DIU, and DARPA through Innovation programs like Replicator, WLIF, and RDER. The Department also has the opportunity to increase integration through Joint Experimentation events.

Question. In the past, for example in the Manhattan Project and the Space Race, the United States made great use of foreign technical talent to achieve national goals. Today, there is growing concern that China is making great progress in recruiting technical talent that has been trained at United States universities. The Chinese are also investing significant resources to provide funding and facilities to technical experts in critical fields to attract them to work in China.

In your view, what steps should the Department take to ensure that the foreign technical talent that we educate and support remains in here in the United States and commits to working on our high-priority national missions to maintain our technological superiority?

Answer. I have not been read into the specifics on this topic, but if confirmed, I look forward to learning how the Department can secure the appropriate technical talent required to empower the joint warfighter. Ultimately, attracting and retaining the right talent in any organization hinges on the ability to establish and maintain a positive work environment that encourages innovation and values the talent of its people. If confirmed and I re-enter the military I am keen to get up to speed on this matter. We must have a better way to inspire and retain STEM talent here in the United States.

Question. How could we leverage our defense labs and DOD research funding programs to overmatch Chinese efforts by providing resources and facilities to attract technical talent to stay and work in the United States?

Answer. The United States offers many advantages over China for talented researchers and engineers to work and provide for national security. Technological prowess, state-of-the-art facilities, and American way of life can all be used to draw top talent from around the world and away from China. Embedding young scientists and engineers in defense-oriented labs early and often to incentivize a unique form of service, ways they can harness their skill set to advance national interests. Defense labs and DOD research funding programs can be used to invest in facilities and maintain technological prowess where we lead the world, regain where we have slipped, and pioneer new fields.

JOINT ACQUISITION

Question. What are your views regarding the effectiveness of joint acquisition programs, especially in delivering integrated and interoperable solutions for the Department and which programs would you consider to be candidates for joint development and acquisition?

Answer. Joint acquisition programs have been effective at delivering integrated and interoperable solutions for the Department. One example is the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle program, which has been balancing performance and cost to provide the Joint Force with a tactical vehicle fleet that is more lethal and sustainable. The Golden Dome for America will require a level of coordination across the Services that makes it a natural candidate for joint acquisition. Additionally, the Future Vertical Lift family of systems is a good candidate for joint development. It implements a Modular Open Systems Approach that improves affordability, enhances capability, and reduces supply chain risk across the Services.

Question. What are your views on joint, enabling or cross-cutting capabilities that may not be treated as acquisition programs, such as JADC2? Do you have sufficient

authority to advocate or direct the services to ensure there are no seams in planning or execution of such efforts?

Answer. In the current global security environment, the United States military faces agile adversaries who increasingly seek to undermine the Nation's strategic and operational strengths by impeding, and where possible, denying command and control (C2) capabilities. The ability of the U.S. military to regain and maintain information and decision advantage through non acquisition programs, considered in the CJADC2 continuous modernization efforts, must remain a top priority for the Department. The capabilities developed by Services, Agencies, and partners across the DOTMLPF-P spectrum are programs of record by exception, not by rule. CJCS has full authority to advocate for Combatant Command and Services' capabilities and, if confirmed, I will use the granted authorities and assess whether additional authorities are required to assist the Combatant Commands and Services with planning to foster joint capability and manage Joint Force development. If confirmed, I will continue to partner with OUSD (A&S) [Acquisition], OUSD (R&E), and CAPE/Comptroller [PPBE] to strengthen planning and execution to enable integrated, end-to-end mission capability.

Question. If confirmed, what role would you assign to yourself in ensuring that joint acquisition priorities are given full and fair consideration in Military Service budget processes?

Answer. If confirmed, part of my responsibility through the Vice Chairman is the Joint Requirements Oversight Council which represents the voice of the joint force and the joint warfighter. If confirmed, I will give my best military advice to the Secretary of Defense on all matters, including the budget. The Chairman's Program Recommendation (CPR) provides the Chairman with a formal mechanism to communicate statutory military advice on programs and budget issues, to include joint acquisition priorities.

Question. Do you believe that the combatant command's role in the acquisition process is sufficient to ensure that they can get needed capabilities fielded to them in a timelier manner? If not, are there other tools or authorities needed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure the Defense Acquisition System (DAS) continues to seek and consider input from the Combatant Commanders through the JROC process. This ensures that the voices of the Combatant Commanders are globally integrated and carefully considered holistically. I understand the importance of maintaining and continuing to evolve the Department's Adaptive Acquisition Framework (AAF) comprised of several acquisition pathways, each tailored for the unique characteristics and risk profile of the capability being acquired. If confirmed, I will seek opportunities for increased Combatant Command involvement in the AAF, particularly in the development of software, where operator input to the developer can create more useful capability in a shorter timeline.

JOINT REQUIREMENTS OVERSIGHT COUNCIL (JROC)

Question. The JROC is vested with the responsibility to assess joint military capabilities; establish and approve joint performance requirements that ensure interoperability between military capabilities; and identify new joint military capabilities based on advances in technology and concepts of operation.

How would you assess the effectiveness of the JROC in establishing joint requirements for submission to the DOD acquisition process?

Answer. Within the Joint Force, no other entity is more responsible for Joint Force Design and balancing the current needs of the Joint Force with the future needs of the Joint Force than the JROC. The JROC provides a critical forum for the Service Vice Chiefs to assess joint military capabilities, identify, approve, and prioritize capabilities to ensure the Joint Force can implement the National Defense Strategy. One of the JROC's key strengths is its ability to provide a high-level, strategic perspective on capability development, ensuring that major acquisition programs align with Joint Warfighting Concepts and multi-domain operational needs. It has also improved cross-Service coordination, particularly through initiatives like Capability Portfolio Management Reviews, which help identify capability gaps, solutions, redundancies and promote integration. Authorities of the JROC have changed over time. While the JROC is effective, it could be improved by ensuring that its authorities match its responsibilities.

Question. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the JROC focuses on joint performance requirements without overprescribing key performance parameters and key system attributes that overly constricts system design space?

Answer. The JROC should be in the business of providing top-down, strategic-level direction to the Services to promote Joint Force design instead of micro-managing Service acquisition decisions. The JROC currently delegates key performance

parameters and system attributes to the Services unless they are deemed Joint Performance Requirements, meaning they are critical to ensure interoperability or integration of the Joint Force.

Through recent changes such as expanding the use of the Middle Tier of Acquisitions (MTA) pathway, even more authority is being delegated to the Services. While use of rapid acquisitions pathways such as MTA are designed to improve speed and efficiency, that must be balanced with strong joint oversight to prevent fragmentation of the future force. The JROC's ability to assess and enforce joint performance requirements remains critical in ensuring that the warfighters receive interoperable, integrated, and effective capabilities for future conflicts.

Question. What is your view on the Capability Management Portfolio Review process for the JROC to issue requirements from the top-down?

Answer. Recently, the Joint Staff revamped capability portfolio management, creating a new approach to drive strategic alignment across requirements, acquisition, and R&D. I believe this approach has been successful at holistically evaluating gaps from a portfolio perspective as well as promoting top-down, concept-driven, future-facing requirements.

Additionally, the Joint Staff has partnered with the offices of the undersecretaries for Acquisitions and Sustainment, and Research and Engineering to create a holistic portfolio view of capability development. This effort allows warfighters producing capability requirements to be fully informed of new technologies and commercially developed products that may fill requirements and capability gaps identified in support of the Joint Force.

THE JOINT CAPABILITIES INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS (JCIDS)

Question. Section 811 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 required the Joint Staff to review and propose a clean-sheet approach to the JCIDS process focused on streamlining approvals, integration of commercial technologies, and taking advantage of iterative development processes.

Is the JCIDS process effective in providing the information the JROC requires to anticipate both the current and the future needs of the joint force?

Answer. The intent of JCIDS is to ensure jointness, interoperability, joint warfighter voice, and strategic alignment and prioritization of future capability development. While JCIDS has been effective in reducing redundancy and improving coordination across the services, it needs reform in order to keep pace with rapidly emerging threats and technological advancements. As part of Fiscal Year 2024 Section 811 Report to Congress, the Joint Staff is currently developing evolutionary and revolutionary reforms to the joint requirements process, including a clean-sheet rewrite of JCIDS, in order to deliver the right capability to the warfighter at speed and at capacity.

Question. How effective has JCIDS been in delivering capabilities that meet the evolving needs of the joint force, particularly in the face of rapidly advancing threats?

Answer. The JCIDS process was developed to ensure due diligence and accountability for the development of large, legacy platforms that cost billions of dollars of taxpayer money. Today, given rapid technological change and the rapid modernization of the Nation's adversaries, this system no longer fully meets the Department's needs. The Department has made a number of changes, through the Middle Tier of Acquisition and Software Acquisition Pathway, to respond to the evolving needs of the Joint Force amidst a rapidly changing technology environment.

However, an overreliance on rapid acquisition increases the risk of service-centric solutions that may not align with broader joint operational concepts. Additionally, without appropriate joint oversight, programs leveraging the rapid acquisition pathways may move quickly at the expense of joint integration and interoperability. Furthermore, increased use of these pathways increases the risk of overall inefficiency as Services may be unaware of the similar efforts by their sister Services and unnecessarily duplicate their efforts. If confirmed, I will continue to work with the Joint Chiefs and JROC to ensure that Service controlled initiatives are not stovepiped or unnecessarily redundant and that all strive to present joint integrated solutions.

Question. What do you see as the most significant gaps in the current JCIDS process that prevent it from ensuring interoperability and channeling investments toward warfighters' priorities?

The 2021 General Accountability Report "Weapon Systems Requirements" found that staffing documents through JCIDS took an average of 800 days compared to a notional timeline of 103 days.

Answer. While the JROC and JCIDS processes provide a structured framework for identifying opportunities for multi-Service collaboration, there is still room for improvement in fully leveraging joint synergies and aligning related acquisition programs. The JROC has made progress in fostering cross-Service coordination, particularly through initiatives like Joint Warfighting Concept and Capability Portfolio Management Reviews. JCIDS has been effective in reducing redundancy and improving coordination across the services, but it must continue to evolve to keep pace with rapidly emerging threats and technological advancements.

However, the JROC lacks directive acquisition and budget authority, which prevents it from filling the high-priority gaps identified by the Combatant Commands. Additionally, the JCIDS process and documentation is antiquated and cumbersome, which is why the Joint Staff is working to streamline it to ensure outcomes over process. Last, continued modernization of KMDS, the joint requirements data base, is critical to ensure real-time visibility of joint and Service requirements. DOD must smartly go faster and pick up the pace.

Question. In your view, what is the appropriate role of Combatant Commanders in the JCIDS process?

Answer. Combatant Commanders play a critical role in the JCIDS process, as they are uniquely positioned to articulate both near-term operational needs and long-term capability gaps based on real-world threats and evolving mission requirements. Their direct input ensures that joint requirements are not just service-driven but are aligned with the operational realities of multi-domain conflict and regional security challenges. The Combatant Commanders submit their Integrated Priority Lists (IPLs) annually, which are prioritized by the JROC and submitted to Congress, and the Urgent Acquisition pathway allows for the Combatant Commander to raise issues for acceleration. If confirmed, I will ensure the JROC continues to seek and consider input from the Combatant Commanders.

Question. If confirmed, how would you improve the effectiveness of the process in identifying both the near-term and long-term needs of the Combatant Commander?

Answer. The needs of the Combatant Commanders are currently addressed through the Capability Gap Assessment process, where the JROC evaluates and prioritizes CCMD IPLs, as well as executes the Joint and Emergent Operational Need (JUON/JEON) processes, whereby urgent CCMD requirements are rapidly triaged and sent to OSD(A&S) for immediate funding, if validated. While the CGA/IPL process is successful at identifying gaps, these gaps often remain unfilled because of the JROC's limited acquisition and budget authorities. In contrast, a validated JUON/JEON can result in funding direction from OSD(A&S), however, this approach still requires hard to come by Service offsets. A funding set aside for JUONs/JEONs may be able to address this problem.

Question. Do you have any recommendations for changes to the structure, authority, or processes of the JROC or the JCIDS?

Answer. The Joint Staff is currently developing recommendations to the structure, authorities, and process of the JROC and JCIDS. The recommendations will be included in the response to Section 811 tasking and will align with the following principles:

- Accelerate the right capability to the warfighter at capacity
- Empower the Joint warfighter voice while balancing speed and operational risk
- Reduce bureaucracy while ensuring Joint interoperability and integration
- Optimize alignment and agility between requirements, acquisition, and budgeting
- Ensure authorities match responsibilities across DOD, Congress, and DIB

TEST AND EVALUATION

Question. Test and evaluation is critical to ensuring that the systems warfighters rely on in combat are proven to work effectively, reliably, and safely.

How do you assess the current separation of developmental testing (DT) and operational testing (OT) in terms of its impact on delivering combat-ready systems to the joint force? Does maintaining these silos delay the identification of critical issues that affect warfighter effectiveness?

Answer. The Department of Defense must better integrate developmental testing and operational testing. As Chairman, if confirmed, I will work closely with the Office of Secretary of Defense, the Services, and other Defense organizations to ensure the Department balances the need for robust testing to verify that capabilities provided to the warfighter operate as intended with the need to move faster in fielding new technologies. Throughout, if confirmed, I will be an advocate for developing, operating, and testing in a joint manner to the maximum extent possible.

Question. How effective do you find the DOD's reliance on discrete, milestone-driven test events—such as Initial Operational Test & Evaluation—in meeting the rapid pace of modern threats and technological change? Are these singular evaluations keeping pace with warfighter needs?

Answer. In my experience, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to developmental and operational testing across the wide spectrum of military capabilities the Joint Force develops and operates. Operational Test and Evaluation is not a Joint Staff function. Across the board, though, we must go faster. We must allow greater iteration and more rapid cycles of feedback as we experiment with and test emerging capabilities. As Chairman, if confirmed, I will work closely with the Office of Secretary of Defense, the Services, and other Defense organizations to inform testing practices with input from the warfighter, focusing on balancing the need for robust testing to ensure that the capabilities provided to the warfighter operate as intended with the need to move faster in fielding new technologies.

Question. Do you think the current operational test and evaluation system also provides for the flexibility to assess commercial technologies that might be acquired or fields by DOD through means or processes that are not traditional acquisition programs of record?

Answer. No. From my experience with private sector investment, I know that acquisition processes and procedures slow the adoption of commercial technologies by the Department of Defense at many steps in the process. If confirmed, as Chairman, I will be an advocate for moving faster and increasing flexibility in processes, so path-breaking capabilities are delivered to the warfighter more quickly. At the same time, effective operational test and evaluation must be fundamental aspects of any faster capability development effort, as it is essential that any capabilities delivered to the warfighter perform as intended.

Question. Are you satisfied with DOD's test and evaluation capabilities, including the test and evaluation workforce and infrastructure of the Military Services? In which areas, if any, do you feel the Department should be developing new test and evaluation capabilities?

Answer. No. The Department's current mix of development test and operational test range infrastructure is unsatisfactory for today's modern threat environment. One area in which the Joint Force should enhance the ability to test, and train is in the Electromagnetic Operational Environment. Investment in joint live virtual constructive training is essential. The Joint Staff is also currently working to write a report to Congress on the feasibility and advisability of establishing a regional joint multi-domain non-kinetic training and experimentation environment. The development of a regionally aligned multi-domain non-kinetic training, testing, and experimentation environment is critical to provide the Joint Force and the United States' Allies and partners an immersive and realistic operational environment to train across all domains against emerging technologies and peer threats. This environment needs to replicate a contested, congested, and constrained Electromagnetic Operational Environment with an accurate threat representation to facilitate quality training and testing at scale to support throughput and readiness of the Nation's warfighters.

DOD READINESS

Question. How would you assess the current readiness of the DOD components—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—to execute the 2022 National Defense Strategy and Combatant Commanders' associated plans?

Answer. Based on my own experience, as well as public reporting on the status of the Joint Force, I am confident that the Joint Force—including materiel, equipment, training, and personnel—is ready to meet its current challenges. This includes protecting the Homeland, meeting alliance commitments, and maintaining advantage over any potential adversary. If confirmed, I commit to continued assessment and providing my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

Question. What is your assessment of the risk the Combatant Commands and the Combat Support Agencies have accepted in regard to their readiness to execute the operational plans associated with the 2022 National Defense Strategy?

Answer. Based on my own experience, as well as public reporting on the status of the Joint Force, I recognize that operational tempo over the last two-plus decades has had impacts. If confirmed, I commit to assessing the extent of that risk and providing my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS. I also look forward to working alongside Congress, specifically on the acquisition of new platforms, strengthening of the Defense Industrial Base, and taking care of personnel, to ensure the Joint Forces is ready to meet global operational requirements. Additionally, with sustained, predictable, adequate, and timely funding from Congress and the Sec-

retary-directed reprioritization, we can improve readiness, build the future force that maintains the competitive advantage, and decrease risk.

Question. If confirmed, specifically what actions would you recommend to restore full spectrum readiness in all DOD components—across the domains of materiel and equipment, personnel, and training—and on what timelines?

Answer. If confirmed, I will evaluate and discuss readiness with Service Chiefs and Combatant Commands and make recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS. We also must be clear eyed and explicit about what things we cannot do.

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. On the battlefield of the future, warfighters will need exponentially more energy with rapid recharge and resupply over longer operating distances. The quality of electricity will matter too—the DOD's vehicles, sensors, robots, cyber forces, directed energy weapons, and artificial intelligence will be controlled by systems sensitive to fluctuations in voltage or frequency.

If confirmed, are there actions you can take to harness innovations in operational energy and link them with emerging joint operational concepts?

Answer. The need for large volumes of Operational Energy remains one of the Department's greatest logistical burdens and largest vulnerabilities, especially in a contested environment. If confirmed, I will work with the Military Departments to prioritize energy demand reduction and the adoption of technologies that reduce logistics requirements in contested or austere environments. Through the implementation of the Joint Warfighting Concept, the Joint Staff is seeking innovative capabilities to address key operational problems. Operational energy innovations contribute to offsetting those problems and are being examined in wargames, tested in field experiments, and integrated into joint exercises.

Question. In what specific areas, if any, do you believe DOD needs to improve the incorporation of energy considerations in strategic planning processes?

Answer. In my view, DOD can improve the incorporation of energy considerations in the following specific areas:

- Continue to assess Combatant Command posture and readiness annually through the Chairman's Risk Assessment. These reviews can highlight where energy considerations may be overlooked within the strategic planning process.
- Ensure that Joint concepts and operational plans are fully informed of risks associated with contested logistics and threats to the assured delivery of energy.
- Align force development and design efforts with appropriate risks to energy supportability and required posture.

If confirmed, I will work with the Joint Staff to include requirements for joint force energy supportability and demand reduction in recurring strategic guidance.

Question. How can DOD acquisition systems better address requirements related to a military platform's use of energy?

Answer. The Joint Staff conducts an energy analysis for all JROC requirements and energy is one of the four mandatory KPPs. If confirmed, I will expect to focus the analysis of a systems energy consumption in terms of how it contributes to the warfighting capability by adding to lethality and/or reducing the logistics support needed.

Question. If confirmed, are there actions you can take to prioritize energy resilience and mission assurance for DOD, including acquiring and deploying sustainable and renewable energy assets to support mission critical functions, and address known vulnerabilities?

Answer. Energy resilience is part of every assessment performed on existing critical infrastructure. If confirmed, I will ensure that identification, vulnerability assessment, and risk mitigation of mission critical assets remain a Joint Staff priority.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT AND INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Question. Since September 11, 2001, collaboration—both analytical and operational—between DOD and the Intelligence Community has grown increasingly close. On one hand, seamless collaboration is vital to an effective and rapid response to non-traditional threats and bringing together the strengths of the full spectrum of defense and intelligence capabilities can generate more effective solutions to complex problems. On the other hand, without effective management and oversight, such collaboration risks blurring distinct agency missions, authorities, and funding, as well as creating redundant lines of effort.

In your view, are there aspects of the current relationship between the Department and the Intelligence Community that should be re-examined or modified?

Answer. Risk Management, Prioritization, and Warning. Intelligence analysis (likelihood) remains a key part of informing risk analysis, while intelligence gaps/shortfalls are increasingly a driver of the risk assessment process. As the Intelligence Community (IC) refines its risk processes, efforts to improve DOD and IC integration on risk assessment and mitigation should be enhanced. Recommendation: DIE and IC seniors re-examine strategic processes associated with risk and processes that set overall IC-DIE priorities.

Capability Development and Programming Recommendation. NIPF and DOD priorities bring with them separate funding streams (National Intelligence Program (NIP) under title 50 and Military Intelligence Program (MIP) under Title 10). These competing priorities can limit the DIE's ability to appropriately posture for emerging Joint Force concerns and significantly slow the Joint Force's response time to the changed environment. Recommendation: The Joint Capability Integration and Development System (JCIDS) or a successor process should re-examine and consider adopting streamlined procedures for capability requirements principally developed by Defense Intelligence Enterprise (DIE) elements with Combat Support Agency status and/or responsibilities. Codify the Joint Intelligence Program Recommendation (JIPR), issued for the first time on a pilot basis in fiscal year 2024, and spanning both DOD and IC-resourced intelligence capabilities, as part of my Joint Strategic Planning System to cement gains for warfighter intelligence support.

Crisis Response. On the topic of DOD and IC synchronization across the competition-conflict continuum, DOD and IC employ distinct processes that may challenge efforts to synchronization when responding to contingencies and crises. Recommendation: Creation of a DOD-IC Crisis Response framework will enable development of agile, coherent models to test and evaluate Joint Concepts and improve Joint Force readiness. Currently, DOD and IC lessons learned elements are examining potential improvements to their pre-crisis coordination.

We cannot afford to miss any opportunities to integrate the title 10 and title 50 community. We must integrate early and always with each other. This was a foundational core tenet of mine while serving at CIA and if confirmed, will be as the Chairman

INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RECONNAISSANCE (ISR) CAPABILITIES

Question. Demand for ISR of every kind has grown exponentially in recent years, largely due to the enhanced situational awareness and targeting capabilities they afford commanders. Almost all of the geographic Combatant Commands have validated ISR requirements that are not being met.

What is your assessment of DOD's current disposition of ISR assets across the Combatant Commands?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review ISR asset allocation to Combatant Commands to ensure it is aligned with National Defense Strategy priorities and provide my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

Question. What do you perceive as the most concerning shortfalls in both the capability and availability of ISR assets?

Answer. Demand for ISR has and will likely always outpace supply. Evolving adversary capabilities are driving a deliberate move toward higher capacity modernized ISR systems. To keep pace, if confirmed, I will advocate for developing tools to take advantage of space-based ISR and publicly available information.

Question. What is your assessment of current service efforts to develop increased capabilities, as well as the processing, exploitation, and dissemination capabilities and capacity to support increased collection?

Answer. If confirmed, I will assess the recently completed Space-Derived Exploitation Capability Portfolio Management Review and encourage the Services, NGA, and NRO to invest in artificial intelligence/machine learning solutions which are at various stages of technical maturity and confidence levels.

Question. How does increased demand square with Services' plans to divest many of the platforms providing ISR to the Combatant Commanders?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the Service's capabilities against the Combatant Commands requirements and provide my recommendations to the SecDef and POTUS.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Question. Despite significant efforts by the Military Services to enhance their response to sexual assaults, including measures to care for victims and hold assailants

accountable, the prevalence of sexual assault and unwanted sexual conduct, primarily for female servicemembers aged 17 to 24, remains high.

Given your experience as a military officer, do you believe the policies, programs, and resources, including the DOD Restricted (Confidential) Reporting Policy, that DOD and the Military Services have put in place to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct, and to protect service members who report sexual misconduct from retaliation, are working? If not, what else must be done?

Answer. Congress and the Department have collaborated on many helpful actions to counter sexual assault in the military. Indications are that these are starting to have an impact: prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment decreased in 2023 in the Armed Forces for the first time in several years. However, more must be done to sustain these changes. If confirmed, I will continue to vigorously support policies and programs implemented to prevent sexual assault, improve support to victims, and hold offenders appropriately accountable. I will stress that Joint Force readiness hinges on the preparedness of the warfighters, which is most effectively achieved within cohesive units led by empowered chains of command. It is imperative to foster healthy command climates and prevent harmful behaviors. To this end I support applying the resources provided to us for this purpose, which include the prevention and response workforces and regular assessments of military unit health worldwide. I anticipate leading the other Service Chiefs in continued focus on this issue, and support having a high-level official dedicated to sexual assault prevention and response in the military. [Note: Such an official already exists: The Director of the DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office is an SES, a position already required by Fiscal Year 2011 National Defense Authorization Act Section 1611 and Fiscal Year 2012 National Defense Authorization Act Section 583.] Sexual assault and sexual harassment destroy unit cohesion, degrade readiness, and deter both men and women from serving. There is no place for these crimes in the United States Armed Forces.

ACTIVE AND RESERVE COMPONENT END STRENGTH

Question. In the face of historic recruiting challenges, active force end strength continues to shrink across all military services except the Space Force.

What aggregate Active end strength do you believe is necessary to meet the demands placed on the Military Services by the 2022 National Defense Strategy and associated operational plans?

Answer. The requested end strength in the Administration's budget submission aligns with manpower needs across the services, and the evolution of the force planning construct within the 2022 National Defense Strategy. This budget aims to balance readiness and modernization challenges today, tomorrow, and into the future with necessary resources. If confirmed, as the Administration provides any updates to strategic guidance, I will be prepared to assist the Secretary of Defense in evaluating appropriate end strength to meet the national security priorities.

Question. In your view, do the Reserve components serve as an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or both? In light of your answer, should the Reserve components be supported by improved equipment, increased training, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?

Answer. The Reserve component plays a vital role in the total force, serving as both an operational and strategic reserve. To effectively execute their key responsibilities, they deserve access to the best equipment and training, with the same standards of the Active component. This ensures that the Reserve component is fully prepared and equipped to support national defense objectives.

ROLE OF THE RESERVE COMPONENT

Question. Historically, the Reserve components have been used as a strategic reserve in the event of significant armed conflict involving the United States. Post-9/11, reserve forces have been used more extensively to support both contingency operations and ongoing military requirements in a garrison environment. Today, in addition to being an operational reserve, members of the Reserve component are used continuously as a part-time workforce for the Department of Defense to perform its ongoing training and readiness requirements.

In your view, should the Reserve components serve as a part-time workforce, an operational reserve, a strategic reserve, or some combination of those?

Answer. The Reserve component serves a vital and multifaceted role within the Total Force, offering strategic depth and operational flexibility. It is not simply a part-time workforce, an operational reserve, or a strategic reserve, but rather a powerful combination of all three. Reserve units provide essential warfighting capabilities and expertise, strategically aligned with mission requirements. The Reserve

component provides scalable readiness to ensure the DOD can respond effectively to both ongoing operations and large-scale crises. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, reservists provide the strategic depth and endurance as part of the Total Force necessary to sustain operations in a prolonged conflict if deterrence fails. They are, in essence, a force multiplier, ensuring the military remains ready and capable of meeting any challenge to national security. Finally, to echo the Secretary's previous comments, as the Department continues to adapt its Total Force to meet the demands of the dynamic strategic environment, the Joint Staff continues to carefully consider and balance the multitude of roles the Reserve component plays in support of the National Defense Strategy."

Question. Do the Reserve components require increased levels of full-time support and oversight by the Active component, including improved equipment, increased training, adequate compensation and reimbursement, effective career management, balanced Professional Military Education requirements, and higher levels of overall resourcing for readiness going forward?

Answer. The Department continuously assesses the readiness of the Reserve components, to include levels of full-time support, resourcing, training, and equipment modernization, to ensure seamless Total Force integration. The DOD also ensures all Reserve component units that deploy in support of global operations have achieved required readiness levels prior to deployment. Regarding Reserve component compensation and reimbursement, the Department has been engaged in a long-term effort to develop duty status reform recommendations for Congress to streamline these issues. Finally, the Services continuously manage reserve members' careers and ensure Reserve component members are also afforded every opportunity to complete Professional Military Education, attend required schools, and complete formal education requirements to achieve advancement.

Question. In your view, what reforms, if any, should be made in order to facilitate easier transitions for members of all components between active and reserve status?

Answer. The Department has been engaged in a long-term effort to develop duty status reform recommendations for Congress to streamline these issues. The need for RC duty status reform (DSR) cannot be overstated and is long overdue. Today's complex system is overly burdensome and results in pay/benefits inequities. Working collaboratively across the Department and the whole of government, DOD has developed an RC duty status reform proposal that is a fundamental redesign of the current system—it streamlines and consolidates the current system and addresses many of its long-standing problems. An integrated, cohesive legislative proposal designed to comprehensively address the long-standing problems with the current duty status system will ensure that we take care of people and actively take steps to rebuild the military. In addition, ongoing efforts to reform current Separation History and Physical Examination Status policy should continue, with the intent of maximizing the retention of personnel leaving Active component service who wish to continue service in the Reserve component. Finally, continued modernization of Service pay and personnel systems is essential to ensuring timely and efficient transitions of personnel between active and reserve status.

MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE AND FAMILY READINESS

Question. The Committee remains concerned about the sustainment of key quality of life programs for military families, such as family advocacy and parenting skills programs; childcare; spouse education and employment support; health care; and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) services such as Commissary and Military Exchange stores.

If confirmed, what quality of life and MWR programs would you consider a priority?

Answer. The Department of Defense has a sacred obligation to take care of service members and their families. Quality of Life is fundamental to recruiting and retaining the all-volunteer force today and in the future.

If confirmed, I will collaborate with the Service Chiefs to strengthen quality of life programs that support service members and their families. I will also review existing programs to identify and prioritize those most critical to military communities and overall force readiness.

I will continue to encourage the advancement of MWR programs and community partnerships that both promote well-being while also adapting to the current demands of servicemembers. These programs include outdoor recreation, sports and fitness, and child development and youth programs.

Question. What factors would you consider in assessing which MWR programs are ineffective or outmoded and thus potentially suitable for elimination or reduction in scope?

Answer. The maintenance and the development of effective quality of life programs is a priority for Service members and their families. If confirmed, I would work with the Service Chiefs and look primarily at usage metrics, benefit, cost, and Service member and family feedback. These programs are critical recruiting and retention tools and must be adequately resourced to ensure a resilient force.

Question. The military services continue to operate at an historically high OPTEMPO, which senior civilian and military leaders in the Department of Defense have deemed unsustainable.

What recommendations do you have to adjust OPTEMPO in the Armed Forces to ensure that servicemembers and their families are healthy, fit, adequately rested, and have a sustainable lifestyle so that they are prepared for our next major conflict?

Answer. We continuously monitor and assess the global deployment of forces to ensure they are committed in line with National Defense and National Military Strategies. In addition, the Secretary has established Deployment-to-Dwell and Mobilization-to-Dwell standards, that are monitored by the Services, to ensure service-members are not overutilized. Through these measures, the aim is to ensure the All-Volunteer Force is optimized for global commitments while ensuring the needs of service-members and their families.

MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM REFORM

Question. Section 702 of the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, as modified by Sections 711 and 712 of the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, transferred the administration and management of military hospitals and clinics from the Military Departments to the Defense Health Agency (DHA), a Combat Support Agency. Additionally, Section 732 of the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act required the development of joint force medical capabilities that meet the operation planning requirements of the combatant commands.

In your view, in the aggregate, how many military medical providers and what medical capabilities, are required to support the Combatant Commanders' operational plans associated with the 2022 National Defense Strategy?

Answer. The National Defense Strategy contains globally integrated medical requirements of rapidly aggregating medical capabilities during conflict, moving casualties in a contested environment, and expanding military trauma centers in the Homeland to care for casualties. The medical force of roughly 180,000 will be close to fully employed to execute and sustain operational plans for a large-scale overseas conflict. The medical force does require additional surge medical capacity within medical centers of the Department, as well as leveraging partnerships with Veterans Health Administration and National Disaster Medical System to execute Homeland contingency plan requirements. As DOD designs a future medical force, the Military Health System needs to prioritize efforts to meet these globally integrated requirements and enable air, land, and sea platforms to deploy agile medical capabilities worldwide. If confirmed, I will work across DOD and with Congress on these efforts.

Question. In your view, do military medical providers across the Military Departments possess today the critical wartime medical competencies required to save the lives of service members injured in combat or contingency operations?

Answer. Yes. I believe the joint medical force possesses the competencies necessary to save lives in a kinetic environment, as evidenced by their performance in overseas contingency operations over the last 20 years. As DOD continues to lose personnel with combat casualty care experience, it is imperative that DOD invests in the workforce to generate critical wartime medical professionals in military medical centers and hospitals. The Department must also leverage partnerships with Veterans Health Administration, Health & Human Services, and National Disaster Medical System, and in private sector partnerships to treat complex care patients in peacetime and sustain the competency and capacity to recover combat casualties in wartime. Additionally, DOD must embed medical capabilities far forward to increase survivability in a contested, degraded, and contaminated wartime environment of the future.

Question. In your view, are the Services adequately supporting DHA by assigning to MTFs the appropriate number of military medical providers in the specialties needed at the MTFs?

Answer. The Department is working to invest in the healthcare workforce that includes the Services' military medical providers and Defense Health Agency civilian medical providers to improve primary and specialty care access in MTFs. The DOD continues to assess the adequacy of military medical providers in the MTFs and

their overall readiness. Additional military and civilian workforce in the MTFs improve access to care for 9.6 million beneficiaries, improves readiness and maximizes education programs for medical professionals, and mitigates the rising costs to provide care in the civilian network. If confirmed, I will work across DOD and with Congress on these efforts.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Question. If confirmed, specifically what would you do to ensure that sufficient suicide prevention and mental health resources are available to deployed servicemembers, as well as to servicemembers and their families at home station?

Answer. I recognize that physically and mentally fit servicemembers are a critical component of Total Force readiness. If confirmed, I would strongly recommend prioritizing mental health resources for all servicemembers and their families by enhancing the access to mental health professionals by advocating for the expansion of telehealth services and embedded mental health professionals at the unit level. I would work closely with policymakers in the Office of the Secretary of Defense to ensure that adequate resources are made available for evidence-based suicide prevention programs and regularly monitor all programs for effectiveness to ensure and enhance Service member readiness. Additionally, I will promote leadership involvement in recognizing warning signs and strengthening family support initiatives that promote resilience and open discussion around mental health. My commitment is to ensure every servicemember and their family has access to the mental health resources they need.

MENTAL HEALTH

Question. DOD has made great strides in reducing the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors, but many servicemembers, especially senior leaders, remain concerned that their military careers will be adversely affected should their chains 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.

In your view, does DOD effectively bridge the gap between a service member's desire for confidentiality and the chain of command's legitimate need to know about matters that may affect individual service member and the unit readiness?

Answer. Yes, I believe DOD has made significant changes to bridge the gap between Service Members' desires and the chain of command's legitimate need to know. The DOD continues to assess how it can help those who struggle with complex issues, while still ensuring the readiness and lethality of the force. Mental health is an element of total health, and the DOD needs to optimize every aspect of the Warfighter and their families. I fully support Service Members and their families seeking mental health care.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

Question. In order to exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive timely testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to consult with this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of

testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this committee? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, Federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer yes or no.

Answer. Yes.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

SENATOR TOM COTTON

U.S. NUCLEAR DETERRENT

1. Senator COTTON. Lieutenant General Caine, on February 25, 2025, Chairman Wicker and I wrote a classified letter to Secretary of Defense Peter Hegseth and Secretary of Energy Chris Wright on matters relating to U.S. nuclear deterrence and modernization. Will you commit to reviewing this letter, the attached documents, and receiving a briefing on the subject from the Joint Staff, J-5 upon confirmation?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes. If confirmed, I will look forward to this briefing.

TERRORISM

2. Senator COTTON. Lieutenant General Caine, you have extensive experience in the Middle East, particularly when dealing with terrorists like Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In the cases of military force, how would you advise we use the military to contain Iran's proxy terrorist groups like Hamas, Houthis, and Hezbollah?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will conduct a thorough review of our operations and plans in the Middle East in the context of the policy guidance provided by the President and the Secretary of Defense. I will then provide my military advice on how to best employ the United States Military to achieve United States national policy goals, as appropriate.

U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND

3. Senator COTTON. Lieutenant General Caine, any potential conflict in U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) will need large amounts of high-end munitions. How will you instill a sense of urgency at the Pentagon, as well as our private sector, so they make the investments necessary to rebuild America's defense industrial base?

Lieutenant General CAINE. As I stated in testimony, we must be clear in our sense of urgency. The Joint Staff has established a Joint Munitions Working Group (JMWG) from organizations across DOD to specifically address this problem. Acknowledging we have munitions shortages relative to our requirements and barriers within the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) to respond to the urgent demand for more critical munitions in a combat scenario, the JMWG is focused on finding near-term solutions to rapidly increase magazine depth for the high priority munitions most relevant to warfighting success in INDOPACOM. To that end, we have identified a set of INDOPACOM-focused priority munitions both in development and in production. The JWMG will recommend investments to diminish or eliminate the bottlenecks preventing the DIB from delivering these decisive munitions on time and at scale. I and the Joint Staff will work with OSD and the Services to impart that sense of warfighting urgency and to increase the agility of the DIB to reload our combat forces in the event of conflict.

4. Senator COTTON. Lieutenant General Caine, I am concerned that we are not taking active steps in INDOPACOM to preposition material and take advantage of “left of conflict” capabilities. Are you aware of any legislative roadblocks prohibiting the pre-positioning of deterrent capabilities today?

Lieutenant General CAINE. At present I am not aware of any legislative roadblocks preventing the pre-positioning of deterrent capabilities in INDOPACOM today. While the Department of Defense (DoD) is required to maintain pre-positioning programs, resource constraints remain a challenge. Increased funding and prioritization for pre-positioned war reserve materiel would help accelerate efforts, enabling more effective deterrence and support for operational readiness.

5. Senator COTTON. Lieutenant General Caine, will you commit to advising the President, National Security Council, and Secretary of Defense on the full extent of existing authorities like the Defense Sensitive Support program to best posture the United States and our allies for success against Communist China?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

6. Senator COTTON. Lieutenant General Caine, will you commit to releasing a memo within your first 30 days as a Chairman requiring that INDOPACOM come back with all possible operational requirements that may require title 50 or unique authority support?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Consistent with my testimony, I believe an early integrated approach is foundational to maintain the strong working relationships that currently exist. We cannot afford to miss any opportunities to integrate the Title 10 and Title 50 community. If confirmed, I will continue to work to ensure relevant frameworks for military forces to support activities of other U.S. Government departments and agencies are appropriately leveraged to pursue U.S. interests, to include at INDOPACOM.

7. Senator COTTON. Lieutenant General Caine, will you commit to expanding the Defense Sensitive Support staff if required based on those findings?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will ensure our staffs are appropriately organized and staffed to meet current and future requirements. Consistent with my confirmation testimony, I look forward to continuing work within the Department and with colleagues in other U.S. Government departments and agencies to adjust existing arrangements as the need arises.

READINESS

8. Senator COTTON. Lieutenant General Caine, our Air Force’s fleet-wide mission capable rate has dropped in 62 percent. Out of more than 5,000 planes, which is already the smallest fleet in the service’s history, 1,900 are unavailable for tasking at any given time. What do we need to improve the readiness of the Air Force?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Based on my experiences, there are many variables such as aircraft use and inventory, plan requirements, modernization efforts, divestment, and supply chain/maintenance issues that impact readiness. If confirmed, I look forward to working alongside Congress and the Department of the Air Force to appropriately resource the Air Force and improve its capability and capacity.

9. Senator COTTON. Lieutenant General Caine, what investments should we be making to help you maintain or increase the Air Force’s readiness?

Lieutenant General CAINE. We should balance an acute need to modernize capabilities of our aircraft to ensure they remain effective against evolving threats, while at the same time adequately funding weapons system sustainment and modernization. If confirmed, I pledge continued collaboration with the Air Force and Congress to analyze and develop courses of action to best pursue our national security objectives.

10. Senator COTTON. Lieutenant General Caine, what other readiness concerns do you have or the Department of Defense?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I have not been briefed on specific readiness challenges to the Department, but based on my experience, readiness challenges exist across many elements that span materiel, personnel, and training. Specifically, depleted munition inventories due to operational tempo and the transfer of munitions to allies, recruiting challenges, unrealized interoperability and shared operational concepts, and a challenged defense industrial base, to include modernized facilities like shipyards.

COUNTER-UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS

11. Senator COTTON. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you advise the Department of Defense to organize, train and equip for the counter-unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) mission?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Defending against the rapidly evolving UAS threat set presents both a capacity and capability challenge. If confirmed, I will review how the Department organizes, trains, and equips the counter-unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) mission to ensure our warfighters can meet this rapidly evolving threat.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN

ALASKA

12. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, in a 2018 interview, then Secretary of the Navy, Richard Spencer, said that the Navy “need[s] to have on-sea presence [in the Arctic] now that we have a blue water Arctic more times than not.” He additionally pushed the Navy to look at “warm[ing] up Adak again,” not only for additional training but also for naval sea and air facilities as well as bulk fuel capability. When Chinese and Russian naval vessels and air assets enter the Alaska Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), aircraft and ships must often travel long distances, which stretch sustainment and make it more difficult to keep a constant presence in the region where our adversaries are located. Will you commit to reviewing our Arctic posture and specifically pushing for a naval base and bulk fuel facilities at Adak Island to increase presence in the Arctic?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes. The United States is an Arctic nation and the strategic importance of the Arctic to America’s enduring security and prosperity is clear. If confirmed, I commit to review our Arctic posture (forces, footprint, and agreements) and to provide the Secretary of Defense, National Security Council (NSC), and President best military advice regarding the Arctic and our presence there.

13. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, Alaska is the only U.S. State in the Arctic region. What advantages do you see in having multiple ports in the Aleutians and Western Alaska that can refuel U.S. Navy ships?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Multiple refueling ports in Western Alaska and the Aleutians would enhance U.S. Navy operational reach, reduce reliance on distant resupply points, and improve response capabilities in potential conflicts. Collaboration with commercial entities could strengthen logistics through warm port support contracts, dual-use facilities, and effective crisis-transition authorities. It also increases our strategic survivability.

14. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, in Alaska, we have seen joint Russian-Chinese air and naval exercises off our shores, incursions into our ADIZ and EEZ, and a Chinese spy balloon floating over our communities. In your opinion, what capabilities must advance to improve all-domain awareness in Alaska to respond to and be a persistent presence in the Arctic, while Russia and China have developed capabilities to hold our Homeland at risk?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I would continue efforts underway in the department aligned with the Golden Dome for America Executive Order. This effort is assessing the necessary capabilities to improve all-domain awareness across the country, to include Alaska, and provide a persistent presence in the needed regions. We must bolster our overall detection posture.

15. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, Alaska’s importance as a strategic place is not only due to its location but because it forms the “Three Pillars of Military Might”: 1) it acts as the cornerstone of missile defense by housing the majority of the Nation’s ground based nuclear interceptors and many of the Nation’s advanced radars; 2) by providing a strategic platform for expeditionary forces including the 11th Airborne Division (Arctic); and 3) being a hub for Air Combat Power where the largest concentration of fifth generation fighters in the world is located. Will you commit to visiting Alaska to understand the unique capabilities our State brings to deterrence?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, I will.

16. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, my staff and I will work to ensure that the Joint Force has the right infrastructure in place to support our campaigning and contingency requirements. We will continually work to balance our infrastructure needs to ensure that we are making best use of congressional dollars. I look forward to working with you on the issues at Eielson Air Force Base, in particular.

17. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, my State holds the highest concentration of combat-coded fifth generation aircraft anywhere else in the country (over 100). Any conflict in the Indo-Pacific region will undoubtedly call upon Alaskan warfighters and our military assets.

Lieutenant General CAINE. For the last decade I’ve pressed every Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Secretary of the Air Force, and Chief of Staff of the Air Force on the need for more aerial refueling assets in Alaska to support the increasing training requirements and intercept missions.

Last year, I wrote a letter to the previous Secretary of the Air Force, Frank Kendall, pressing him to fulfill the Air Force’s commitments on this issue and Kendall replied with a signed memorandum finally codifying the movement of 4x KC-135s to Eielson AFB in so called “active association”. This MUST NOT be delayed any longer.

18. Senator SULLIVAN. Can I get your commitment that, if confirmed, you will see the completion of that KC-135 basing through to the end?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I commit to working with the SECAF and CSAF toward resolving this issue.

19. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, can I also get your commitment to work expedite the delivery time and increase the readiness rates of the KC-46?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, you have my commitment to working with the SECAF, CSAF, and vendor on expediting the delivery time and increasing the readiness rates of the KC-46.

20. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, my staff and I will work to ensure that the Joint Force has the right infrastructure in place to support our campaigning and contingency requirements. We will continually work to balance our infrastructure needs to ensure that we are making best use of congressional dollars. I look forward to working with you issues at Deadhorse, in particular.

21. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, 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 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Personnel staffing at individual installations is a Service specific requirement, if confirmed, I will commit to working with your office and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force to thoroughly review task organization and manning requirements of the 18th Fighter Interceptor Squadron (FIS) at Eielson AFB.

22. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I commit to working with the SecAf and CSAF to resolve this issue.

23. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, I can commit to reviewing the E-7 program with the Air Force and the Joint Chiefs to advise the Department on resourcing the right mix of sensors that best supports the Joint Force in defending the Homeland.

24. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, 6 years ago, the Marine Corps was poised to alter its Indo-Pacific force laydown to account for the inherent risk of access, basing, and overflight (ABO) denial and limited training opportunities on Marine Corps bases across the Indo-Pacific. The 37th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Robert Neller, sent several teams to Alaska to assess infrastructure and training opportunities to support a Unit Deployment Program (UDP) to preposition assets the Marine Corps would need to surge forward in the event of conflict with the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Alaska's benefits were as obvious then as they are now: Alaska provides year-round training for the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) in nearly every clime and place found on the globe; Alaska's cold weather training opportunities are cheaper than other overseas options and permit significantly larger forces to train simultaneously; perhaps most importantly, Alaska is in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) area of responsibility (AOR). Do you agree in your professional military opinion that it is vital for the Marine Corps to regularly practice in Arctic conditions here in the United States in a place that our adversaries regularly train in?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Marine Corps, as well as all the Services, must be able to operate in any climate or region to defend our national interests. In line with the DOD Arctic Strategy, the Joint Force must be trained, ready, and equipped to mitigate the risks associated with potential contingencies in the Arctic.

DEFENSE ACQUISITION REFORM

25. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, 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. 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will review the report and work with the Department to implement the findings that will help achieve our strategic objectives and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the resource allocation process.

26. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

27. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, what issues did you run into as a defense entrepreneur related to this issue?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, the issues varied from the initial process of bidding for contracts, to the competition phase, to moving requirements, and then the burden of once selected, operationally providing the goods or services we were hired to provide. The FAR is extensive, and I acknowledge it was built for a reason, but if we want to go faster, we need to smartly remove bureaucracy, not add it in. I am not saying we need to make mistakes but rather look for ways to optimize efficiency and effectiveness. There are likely some elements of the FAR that may not be ideally suited for small businesses.

28. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, I will review the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) as outlined in the PPBE Reform Commission report and work with the Department to provide Congress updates.

29. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, in my view, one of the most important findings of the PPBE commission report involved reviewing defense technology portfolios and budget line items to align them with capabilities and provide agile budgeting flexibility by consolidating budget line items. The Vice Chiefs of each service all testified in a recent Readiness Subcommittee hearing that they agreed with the need for budget flexibility. Do you agree that this idea will give the Pentagon more agility to identify and execute important programs at scale that are needed by the warfighter?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, I agree. Aligning defense portfolios and budget line items to enhance budget flexibility is a critical step toward ensuring our warfighters have the resources they need when they need them. I support the PPBE Commission's recommendations to consolidate budget line items. This increased flexibility will allow the Joint Force to respond faster to emerging threats and technological advancements, increasing our alignment to strategic direction while speeding delivery of critical capabilities to the Joint warfighter.

30. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, one of the most successful programs in the Pentagon the last several years has been the Space Development Agency (SDA), which has significantly reduced the time it takes to get satellite sensor systems into orbit cheaply and at scale. However, I am growing concerned that this program is going to be pulled into the slower Pentagon Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS), and potentially lose its technological edge. Will you commit to reviewing this program and helping Congress protect its current organizational configuration to enable scalable satellite launches?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, the space domain continues to become a more critical warfighting domain. I'm not familiar with all of the particulars and unable to commit until such time that I can do so. If confirmed I will look into this matter.

31. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, the Replicator Initiative seems to be trending positively overall with certain exquisite capabilities already acquired. The goal is to scale these capabilities this year. If the Replicator Initiative is successful, there will likely be several lessons learned from it about the procurement process. How do you plan to incorporate lessons learned from Replicator into the rest of the DOD procurement process?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Joint Staff has been partnered with DIU, the Military Departments, and OSD since the inception of Replicator. DIU recently released Replicator lessons learned to the Deputy's Innovation Steering Group (DISG). If confirmed, I intend for the Joint Staff to review these lessons and incorporate any lessons that can positively influence Department procurement processes.

32. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. With all new acquisitions there is risk. It is important to have open, clear communication of that risk with the contractor for the effective use of our limited resources. I will work with the Department to find the tools to support, and if needed motivate, contractors to meet cost, schedule, and performance goals to deliver this dominant capability to the Joint Force. I will also strongly part-

ner with OUSD (A&S), OUSD (R&E), DSD, and others to ensure the fully aligned messaging of expectations to the contractor.

33. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, what do you think we learned from these previous programs that we should do differently with the F-47?

Lieutenant General CAINE. There is tremendous interplay between technological maturity and program performance. I will work with the Department to ensure valuable lessons learned are being applied to acquisition programs providing capabilities to the Joint Force. Some of the things we've learned include the importance of focusing on a limited set of key capabilities to reduce requirements creep, robust intellectual property management, and using Modular Open System Architecture (MOSA) to prevent vendor lock.

CRITICAL MINERAL, NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT, ENERGY

34. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, during his term, President Biden passed 70 executive orders that restricted Alaska's ability to extract its own natural resources despite an acute need for them on both commercial and national security grounds. These executive orders have slowed down or completely hindered resource extraction and critical infrastructure projects important not just to the State but to the Nation as a whole. On the first day of his presidency, January 20, 2025, President Trump signed an executive order entitled Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential. The order in part reads as follows:

"Section 3 Specific Agency Actions

a. The heads of all executive departments and agencies, including but not limited to the Secretary of the Interior; the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere; and the Secretary of the Army acting through the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Public Works, shall exercise all lawful authority and discretion available to them and take all necessary steps to:

(i) rescind, revoke, revise, amend, defer, or grant exemptions from any and all regulations, orders, guidance documents, policies, and any other similar agency actions that are inconsistent with the policy set forth in section 2 of this order, including but not limited to agency actions promulgated, issued, or adopted between January 20, 2021, and January 20, 2025; and

(ii) prioritize the development of Alaska's LNG potential, including the permitting of all necessary pipeline and export infrastructure related to the Alaska LNG Project, giving due consideration to the economic and national security benefits associated with such development . . .

Section 3(d) in addition to the actions outlined in subsection (a) of this section, the Secretary of the Army, acting through the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, shall render all assistance requested by the Governor of Alaska to facilitate the clearing and maintenance of transportation infrastructure, consistent with applicable law. All such requests for assistance shall be transmitted to the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the Interior, and Assistant to the President for Economic Policy for approval prior to initiation.

Section 3(e) the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, under the direction of the Secretary of the Army, shall immediately review, revise, or rescind any agency action that may in any way hinder, slow or otherwise delay any critical project in the State of Alaska."

Will you commit fully to the intent of the President's executive order referenced above where the Department of the Army and the U.S Army Corps of Engineers will play a vital role?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Consistent with my role and authorities as CJCS, I commit to providing the President with my advice on all Executive Orders concerning the employment of the Joint Force.

35. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, one of the results of President Biden's energy policies and the "lock up" of my State through his executive orders is an energy emergency affecting our national security that is unfolding on some Alaska bases. I spoke to Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth recently about this issue and explained to him that there has been a number of instances where commanders of bases like Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) in Anchorage had to tell servicemembers and their families to turn-down their heat, unplug personal property, and turn-off certain critical systems that sustain the base. This was done to preserve electricity and avoid brownouts in the region. Would U.S. national security be enhanced if there was a reliable source of clean-burning Alaskan natural gas available to supply the energy needs of these bases?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, reliable energy sources are critical to national security.

36. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, will you commit to working with the State of Alaska and me to secure a reliable source of energy for Alaska military bases? (LA/CAG/Nominee)

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

GOLDEN DOME FOR AMERICA

37. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, Billy Mitchell, the Father of the U.S. Air Force once said, "I believe . . . whoever controls Alaska controls the world. I think it is the most strategic place in the world. No other State but Alaska is strategically located to provide such a high level of Homeland Defense." At Fort Greely, the 49th Missile Defense Battalion provides our Nation's first line of defense, tasked to defend against the threat of an intercontinental ballistic missile attack, command of 40 of the Nation's 44 ballistic missile interceptors, and reception of data from the nearby Long Range Discrimination Radar (LRDR). Fort Greely will soon house the new Next Generation Interceptor (NGI) missiles, but the program for this system has stalled due to high-cost overruns and manufacturing delays. The NGI will be an essential part of our national ballistic missile system. Will you commit to reviewing the NGI program, if confirmed, and keep Congress informed of what resources are required to field the missile on time?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

38. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, Alaska is strategic not only for its geographic location but also because of its concentration of over 100 fifth generation fighters (the highest concentration in the world) as well as it being home to the 11th Airborne Division, the Nation's preeminent Arctic combat unit. If a war occurred in the INDOPACOM AOR, forces in Alaska would almost certainly be part of that fight and therefore would also be potentially targeted in their home bases. Do you believe that President Trump's "Golden Dome for America" should include Alaska as a critical site to be defended from missile attack given the facts stated above?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I understand that Golden Dome of America is a strategic priority for the administration and that there are ongoing efforts to determine the way forward with respect to how we are going to defend all of the Homeland from these threats, all within the guidance of the administration. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the current status of this work and associated analysis used to determine the geographic coverage of Golden Dome.

39. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, as we discussed in my office, Alaska is the cornerstone of America's missile defense. My colleague Senator Cramer and I introduced the IRON DOME Act to complement President Trump's executive order and we will release a new GOLDEN DOME Act soon to build on DOD and industry's continued development of this system and we will continue to work on it throughout the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) process.

Lieutenant General CAINE. I asked the Vice Chief of Space Operations at Space Force, General Michael Guetlein, in my Readiness Subcommittee hearing on Joint Force Posture how we should think about integrate such a complex system as Golden Dome. His response was excellent.

He said this undertaking is comparable in his mind only to The Manhattan Project. He said it's not because of technological complexity however, "it is complex because of the number of organizations and the number of agencies that need to be involved."

He went on to say: "Organizational behavior and culture are going to be our biggest challenges," and that we must have "one entity in charge that has the full support of the Nation, from the President, from the Hill, and from the American people."

He then said we must empower that person or entity to be resourced and make decisions across organizational boundaries and that we must reinvigorate our industrial base—to include bringing in new, innovative entrants to create Golden Dome.

Do you agree with General Guetlein?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes. Given the heavy emphasis on the space domain and other critical organizations involved in delivering Golden Dome, it is imperative that we identify an entity to serve as the Department lead to synchronize the efforts of the Department across the full scope of capabilities.

40. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, how do you plan to get after these problems of organizational behavior, culture, and resourcing involved in Golden Dome?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense, the Combatant Commanders, Services and other stakeholders to identify areas where we can streamline decisionmaking, increase efficiency and speed delivery of capability.

I will prioritize cultural change where required, by promoting and encouraging a culture of experimentation and calculated risk-taking, recognizing and rewarding innovative thinking and problem-solving.

I will address resourcing by working with the Services and OSD to prioritize our investments and allocate resources more effectively. I will review the operational requirements for Golden Dome to ensure that our resources are aligned with our strategic priorities.

Overall, addressing the problems of organizational behavior, culture, and resourcing within Golden Dome will require a sustained effort and commitment to change. I am committed to setting an environment that ensures the DOD is postured to deploy and maintain a next-generation missile defense shield.

BUDGET

41. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, since World War II, U.S. defense spending has only dropped below 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) 4 times. Right now, we are barely spending over that threshold and the services are paying the heavy price for it in readiness. Senator Wicker's "Peace Through Strength" Act seeks to increase defense spending from 3 percent to 5 percent over time. Do you commit to advocate for the resources that we need to strengthen our services and ultimately save servicemembers' lives in the event of a conflict?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION 8(A) CONTRACTOR

42. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, I recently toured an Small Business Administration (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 as a former defense entrepreneur that the SBA 8(a) program one of the most efficient and effective ways to deliver results to the Federal Government?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, Senator.

43. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, 8(a) contractors provide tremendous value to the Department of Defense. In addition to the rapid contracting capabilities and reduced costs compared to large original equipment manufacturers (OEM) and other services providers, 8(a) organizations transfer the IP to the government. They do not encumber it with legal restrictions like the big government contractors. Clearly, SBA 8(a) programs are one of the most efficient ways to deliver immediate and enduring results to the Federal Government. Wouldn't you agree with me?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do, Senator.

44. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, rapid response capabilities are essential to enable our warfighter to win on the battlefield. At the same time, our defense contractors must rapidly respond to the needs of our military to make the U.S. Military more lethal. Flexible and efficient contracting through the SBA 8(a) program is one trusted way to do this. Please explain how you will ensure that proven, dependable, and cost-effective 8(a) programs remain in place and supported by the Department of Defense.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Maintaining a robust field of defense contractors and contract vehicles that can rapidly respond to warfighter requirements is necessary to provide a lethal Joint Force. I will work with the Department's acquisition authorities to deliver new capabilities and advanced technologies to our Joint Force through flexible and efficient contracting.

SHIPBUILDING AND AMPHIBIOUS SHIP READINESS

45. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, we are in an emergency situation when it comes to amphibious ship readiness for the Marine Corps. A recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report stated that roughly 50 percent of the amphibious fleet was in “poor material condition” including 5 out of 9 LHA/LHD [landing helicopter assault/landing helicopter dock] carriers and 90 percent of LSD (Dock Landing Ships). Those numbers are both shocking and unacceptable.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Last year, the Marine Corps did not deploy a full complement of ships for the entirety of the 15th Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit’s (ARG/MEU) deployment because the USS *Boxer* broke down not long after leaving port. This is supposed to be America’s 9–1–1 force. I have a feeling if this were a Carrier Strike Group this wouldn’t be happening and that’s why I need your help.

Will you commit to solving any disagreements between the Navy and the Marine Corps about amphibious ship repair and maintenance and ensure we are able to deploy at least three ARG/MEUs at any one time as per the Commandant’s guidance to the Corps?

If confirmed, I commit to working with the Secretary, the CNO, and the CMC toward this benchmark.

46. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, if you need Congress’s help when it comes to resourcing amphibious ship readiness, will you commit to reporting back to us as soon as possible with a realistic account of what it would take to fix this issue?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I will, Senator.

47. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, President Trump has expressed a vision where we work with our allies to make use of their existing shipbuilding capacity, leverage lessons learned from their shipyards and encourage their investment in our own maritime industrial base. What is the role that you see our allies playing in expanding our navy shipbuilding infrastructure and growing the Navy?

Lieutenant General CAINE. We must look at all options to increase our capabilities, including increasing our fleet. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Department of the Navy on this critical matter.

48. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, I am very concerned about both our ship and submarine readiness. I know the Navy has established an 80 percent surge readiness goal, but we are nowhere near there today. President Xi is deathly afraid of our submarines. What do you think needs to be done to get subs in and out of maintenance on time and what will you do to simultaneously increase sub maintenance capacity?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The capability and capacity of our submarine industrial base is critical. I would defer to the Department of the Navy for specifics on this matter, but if confirmed, I am committed to focusing on this important topic.

49. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, recognizing that attack submarines are one of our biggest advantages compared to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) do you agree that our inability to produce at least two submarines per year (and deliver them on time) increases risk in the Indo-Pacific during this decade?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes. The inability to produce the requisite number of submarines increases risk. We must focus on the submarine industrial base and motivate the contractors to recruit and retain their workforce. If confirmed, I look forward to working with SECNAV and CNO on this matter.

50. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, our inability to produce at least two submarines per year obviously creates doubt in Australia that we can deliver 3–5 Virginia-class submarines as part of the optimal pathway for Pillar I. What will you tell your Australian counterparts to assure them of our commitment to increasing Virginia production and executing the optimal pathway?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Secretary of Defense has confirmed the U.S. commitment to AUKUS. If confirmed I will continue to work to boost the capacity and output of the Navy’s four public shipyards, which are crucial for building, repairing, and modernizing Virginia-class submarines.

MARINE CORPS FORCE DESIGN

51. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, Marine Corps Force Design and its “divest to invest” initiatives are a bold idea to create an agile and lethal force that can maneuver effectively in a maritime environment. However, many Marine Corps advocates—myself included—are concerned that Force Design may be hollowing out certain critical combat capabilities that will detract from the Marine Corps’ mission as the Nation’s premiere “9–1–1” rapid response force. Militaries around the world have long understood “combined arms” to mean employing a combination of infantry, tanks, cannon artillery, engineers, and close support aircraft in a coordinated manner. Those same military today are endeavoring to add these systems to their inventories and we see their utility on battlefields in Ukraine. Yet, the Marine Corps has divested all the Marine Corps’ tanks, two-thirds of its cannon artillery, nearly all its engineering equipment to breach enemy minefields and obstacles, all its engineering equipment that enables clearing and proofing of minefields, all its bridging, and nearly a third of its close support rotary and fixed wing aircraft. How is it possible for the Corps to have “the most proficient combined arms teams on the globe” without these needed weapons and items of equipment?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The capabilities of the Marine Corps to serve as a rapid reaction force are critical. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Commandant of the Marine Corps on ensuring that Marine Corps Force Design is in line with globally integrated requirements.

52. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, part of Force Design rests on the assumption that the Marine Corps will be able to fill gaps in its combat power (i.e. borrowing tanks, bridging assets, etc.) from other services including the Navy and Army if the need arises. While the services do train together, there are concerns that training for specialized equipment between the services as well as inventory constraints in a major conflict will hinder the Marine Corps’ ability to operate effectively. Given the assumptions of Force Design regarding equipment support, will you commit to reviewing integration between the Marine Corps and other services in support of operations plan (OPLAN) execution to include the readiness of the joint force to support Force Design?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes Senator. If confirmed I will serve as the Global Integrator and thus must understand these critical elements and the associated risks with each branch and sequel.

53. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, the Marine Corps is making a lot of assumptions in my opinion about Navy and Army support for Force Design to be successful. If confirmed, how do you intend to work with General Eric Smith and Admiral James Kilby in order to ensure alignment across the Navy and Marine Corps?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Navy Marine Corps Team, especially in the form of the ARG/MEU is a national asset. I am committed to working with the Marine Corps and Navy and all Services to advise the Secretary on how to develop a total force designed and aligned to meet the national defense strategy.

54. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, will you commit to reviewing the need for a formal agreement or memorandum of understanding between the services for equipment sharing and training in support of Force Design’s assumptions and OPLAN execution?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If need be, yes Senator.

55. Senator SULLIVAN. Lieutenant General Caine, the Marine Corps’ ability to conduct shore-to-shore operations in a contested maritime environment relies on its ability to field sufficient numbers of medium-sized ocean-going craft that can execute movement and landing operations at the operational and tactical level. The Landing Ship Medium (LSM) program is supposed to create a new ship that will achieve those operational requirements. The LSM program however has hit a major snag as the projected costs and time needed to construct these ships is much higher than anticipated requiring the Navy and Marine Corps to look for alternative solutions. These ships are vital to any contingency in the South China Sea or elsewhere. Will you commit to review the LSM program with the Secretary of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations, and Commandant of the Marine Corps and place influence on the need for speed in this program both within the services and in your communications with Congress?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I commit to working with the Department of the Navy to ensure that capabilities are in line with globally integrated requirements.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JACK REED

INSPECTOR GENERAL INVESTIGATION

56. Senator REED. Lieutenant General Caine, Chairman Wicker and I sent a letter to the Acting Department of Defense Inspector General asking for an inquiry into the group chat on the commercially available communications application called Signal, which included members of the National Security Council.

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, in your capacity as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will you ensure that no one under your preview will interfere with the independence of the Inspector General's investigation?

I will, Senator.

57. Senator REED. Lieutenant General Caine, if it comes to your attention that there is interference in the investigation, will you act accordingly?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I will, Senator.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

58. Senator SHAHEEN. Lieutenant General Caine, could you describe the strategic advantage that authorities under the Women, Peace and Security Act at the Department of Defense give the United States over China?

Lieutenant General CAINE. By addressing destabilizing conditions that China ignores and by improving interoperability, DOD WPS authorities have strengthened critical United States military-to-military relationships in the Indo Pacific region, by increasing our understanding and value to the addressed cohorts, all of which provides the United States advantage over China.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND UNFUNDED PRIORITIES

59. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, successive administrations have identified China as the pacing threat and the Indo-Pacific as the priority theater. However, INDOPACOM provided Congress this year with \$11 billion dollars in unfunded priorities, which includes missile defense systems, electronic warfare, munitions, and posture initiatives. Do you agree there is misalignment between DOD's strategy and spending priorities?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will examine the unfunded priorities from the Combatant Commands and pay close attention to where our strategy requirements have created significant gaps between the resources currently allocated to fund them.

60. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, what are the most significant operational and strategic risks to U.S. deterrence and warfighting credibility if INDOPACOM's funding gaps are not addressed?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Our priorities in the INDOPACIFIC focus on an integrated Joint Force and deterring China. Investment in these capabilities would go to ensure United States Forces are postured in the right locations, with the right capabilities to deter in competition and win in the event of crisis or conflict. If confirmed, I will review the operational challenges with the USINDOPACOM commander and be available to further address funding gaps in detail in a classified setting.

61. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, would you be willing to consider significant changes to how the DOD develops and validates capability requirements (JCIDS process) because of how lengthy, inflexible, and bureaucratic it has become?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Joint Staff is fully supportive and actively involved in modernizing the joint requirements process. Through our efforts in response to the FY24 NDAA Sec 811 and the proposed FORGED Act, we are developing evolutionary and revolutionary reforms to the JCIDS and JROC processes.

This includes a congressionally directed clean-sheet rewrite of JCIDS in order to deliver the right capability to the warfighter at speed and at capacity. However, through these reform efforts, we must not sacrifice the CJCS's and JROC's ability to ensure a globally integrated and interoperable joint force that is responsive to the warfighter and aligned to the Department's strategy. Additionally, wholistic reform is needed, including the acquisition system and budget processes, to ensure significantly improve our capability development and delivery. We must also continue to retain the global view.

62. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, given the pacing challenge posed by China, do you think the INDOPACOM Commander should have more of a say in the budgeting and joint resourcing process to ensure we are addressing the combatant commands' operational needs?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Joint Staff will continue to work closely with INDOPACOM as the priority theater, to ensure their priorities are appropriately represented in the Program and Budget Review process.

BORDER SECURITY/DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY MISSION

63. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, while this Administration has repeatedly stated that the Indo-Pacific is the priority theater, Secretary Hegseth has authorized DOD to fund wasteful Department of Homeland Security (DHS) missions at the border on a non-reimbursable basis. These growing costs threaten our readiness in the Indo-Pacific. What impact does non-reimbursable spending on the border mission have on DOD's ability to deter China's increasingly aggressive actions in the Indo-Pacific?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I am unfamiliar with the costs or funding source associated with this mission. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the impacts of this spending with regard to our other critical mission sets.

64. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, do you think it makes any sense for DOD to spend \$2.5 million dollars—on one flight—to deport 100 undocumented immigrants to India?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I am unfamiliar with the costs expended on these flights. Being good stewards of the taxpayer's money is critical, and if confirmed, I commit to acting in a fiscally responsible manner.

65. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, the Defense Department has spent \$376 million in the 2 months on immigration activities related to securing the border and spent about \$40 million of that moving fewer than 400 migrants designated for deportation through lockups at Guantanamo Bay. The majority of this is on a non-reimbursable basis for the DHS mission. Is spending almost \$10 million per person a strategic and responsible use of DOD and taxpayer dollars?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I am unfamiliar with the costs expended on these flights. Being good stewards of the taxpayer's money is critical, and if confirmed, I commit to acting in a fiscally responsible manner.

66. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, furthermore, does this type of conflict prepare the joint force for great power conflict?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The United States must be able to both defend our Homeland and deter and, if necessary, prevail in a great power conflict. If confirmed, as Chairman, I will work to advance the Joint Force's readiness for both missions.

67. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, you highlighted securing the Homeland as a top priority. What specific role do you see for the military in assisting with border security, and how do you balance that with global operational commitments?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The POTUS and SecDef have made clear the protection of our sovereign territory is a key role of the Defense Department. Based on public reporting, the Department has moved out swiftly on border security, to include surging troops, reinforcing and repairing barriers, and supporting illegal alien removal operations through the operational leadership of Commander, U.S. Northern Command. If confirmed, I will review the specifics of our military tasks at the border and ensure my advice to the SecDef includes an assessment on the impact to our other global missions.

68. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, do you believe the DOD's involvement in border security is a misallocation of resources? Why or why not?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I understand the Department is responding to a specific Requested for Assistance (RFA) from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) at the southern border. If confirmed, I will review Department involvement and resource allocations and provide my recommendations to the SecDef.

69. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, has there been any assessment of how this non-reimbursable spending affects military readiness?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Based on my experience, the Department manages impacts on readiness regardless of mission set through detailed and coordinated unit selection, and mission assignment processes. If confirmed, I will review the impacts for non-reimbursable spending on readiness.

70. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, would you recommend changes to the policy of using military assets for immigration enforcement?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will continually work with the Services and Combatant Commands to assess the risk and cost of ongoing operations and advise the SecDef and POTUS on any recommended policy changes.

71. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, what alternative solutions do you propose to address border security concerns without impacting DOD operations?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Based on my experience, over time I would expect that the application of advanced technologies and sensor networks could reduce the need for DOD to support and supplement DHS with manpower at the border.

MISSILE DEFENSE OF HAWAII

72. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, missile defense 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 command and control for INDOPACOM, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, defending all our Homeland is the top priority for the department.

73. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, will you commit to ensuring that any future missile defense strategy and posture provides adequate protection to Hawaii from all types of missile threats?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will review our missile defense strategy and posture to ensure it adequately considers defense of our entire Homeland.

74. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, what advancements in missile defense technology should the DOD prioritize to counter hypersonic threats?

Lieutenant General CAINE. As our adversaries' hypersonic systems become more advanced and more lethal, a multitude of DOD technological investments are required. I will defer specific technology advancements to the Offices of the Under Secretaries of Research and Engineering and Acquisition and Sustainment, however, countering the hypersonic threat requires leveraging the full suite of DOD capability. We must address the threat in all phases of flight, including left of launch, with all means available, beyond traditional kinetic hit-to-kill interceptors.

75. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, how does Hawaii's vulnerability compare to other key strategic locations in the Indo-Pacific?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will work with my team to assess any vulnerabilities not only with Hawaii, but other key strategic locations across the Indo-Pacific.

76. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, what specific infrastructure failures in Hawaii have been most detrimental to readiness, and how would you address them?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Infrastructure failures at Red Hill and the Pearl Harbor port and shipyard have undermined readiness. I support the current plan to address Red Hill and back the Navy's Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP)—a initiative to upgrade dry docks, facilities, and equipment by streamlining workflows and boosting efficiency.

77. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, should DOD prioritize cyber defenses for critical infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific alongside physical missile defense?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, based on my experience, I expect adversaries will persistently target our critical infrastructure to disrupt the movement of United States Forces and resources at the outset of any conflict. To counter this, I would recommend continued close collaboration with the DHS, other Federal agencies, and industry partners. This includes investing in enhanced sensors, defense systems, redundancy, and resilience measures. We should also consider studying additional options to protect our Nation's critical infrastructure and key resources.

INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURES IN HAWAII AND THE INDO-PACIFIC

78. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, the Indo-Pacific region has a massive need for infrastructure investment. Hawaii has faced multiple high-profile DOD failures, including watermain breaks and electrical issues. This affects readiness and our strategic posture in the region. How will you prioritize infrastructure recapitalization versus acquisition of new platforms when finalizing DOD's budget?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will work with the Department to leverage the Program and Budget Review process to prioritize Service investments in the infrastructure required to support our current and future weapon systems, platforms, and posture.

79. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, will you hold the services accountable for ensuring that facilities critical to INDOPACOM are maintained and modernized?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes. I am committed to working with all Services and combatant commands to advise the Secretary on how to maintain and modernize critical facilities to meet the national defense strategy.

ALLIES AND PARTNERS

80. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, the Department of Defense must work closely alongside our allies and partners to meet the pacing challenge posed by China. The Joint Staff plays a key role in driving collaboration and integration of these efforts. How will you support and expand collaboration with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I will work closely with the Secretary of Defense and the Commander USINDOPACOM to review our engagement strategy in the South China and East China Seas. Everything we do in the South and East China Seas requires close coordination with allies and partners. If confirmed, I will continue to pursue opportunities to operate and exercise with them in the region.

CLASSIFIED INFORMATION AND OPERATIONAL SECURITY

81. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, have you ever witnessed or been aware of others mishandling classified information within DOD and how was it addressed?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, as the Director of the Special Access Program Central Office I was aware of the fact that deviations had occurred from time to time. Those matters were handled by the relevant service and not by me or my office.

82. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, what specific safeguards would you implement to prevent leaks of Special Access Program (SAP) information?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Special Access Programs (SAPs) are highly classified programs that require special access controls to protect sensitive information. To prevent leaks, the following safeguards are typically implemented:

1. Need-to-Know Principle: Access to SAP information is strictly limited to individuals who have a legitimate need to know the information to perform their official duties. This principle ensures that only authorized personnel with a valid reason have access to sensitive information.
2. Security Clearances: Personnel with access to SAP information must hold a high-level security clearance, which involves a thorough background investigation and screening process. This ensures that only trustworthy individuals with a proven track record of handling sensitive information are granted access.
3. Compartmentalization: SAP information is often compartmentalized, meaning that it is divided into smaller, isolated segments, and access is restricted to specific compartments. This limits the amount of information an individual can access, reducing the risk of unauthorized disclosure.

4. Access Controls: Physical and electronic access controls, such as biometric authentication, secure doors, and encryption, are used to protect SAP information. These controls ensure that only authorized personnel can access sensitive areas or systems.
5. Encryption: SAP information is often encrypted to protect it from unauthorized access. Encryption algorithms and techniques, such as Advanced Encryption Standard (AES), are used to safeguard sensitive data both in transit and at rest.
6. Secure Communication Channels: SAP information is transmitted through secure communication channels, such as Secure Sockets Layer/Transport Layer Security (SSL/TLS) or Secure/Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (S/MIME), to prevent interception or eavesdropping.

Please note that these safeguards are general in nature and may not be exhaustive or specific to a particular SAP. The actual security controls in place may vary depending on the program's specific requirements and the organization's security policies.

83. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, can you confirm whether you have ever used personal or encrypted messaging applications for official communications?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, in my last job we occasionally used encrypted message apps for routine scheduling or logistical matters.

84. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, how do you balance operational security concerns with the need for rapid communication in crisis situations?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Protecting operational security is a responsibility I take seriously. Rapid communication at the onset of a crisis should occur through networks appropriate for the information being discussed to prevent compromising military operations.

U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND FUNDING AND STRATEGIC RISKS

85. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, what specific programs within INDOPACOM's unfunded priorities list do you believe are most urgent?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will continue to assess the capabilities from Unfunded Priority Lists from all Combatant Commands. With INDOPACOM specifically, I believe that Guam Defense System, Space enabling capabilities, Joint Fires Network, and long-range fires require Department level attention.

86. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, how should Congress prioritize funding between missile defense, electronic warfare, and posture initiatives?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Funding prioritization should be based on the strategic needs of the Joint Force to meet the National Defense Strategy. Focusing on expanding the inventories of current and future munitions, increasing electronic warfare capabilities in the space domain, and fielding the necessary forces are critical to protect the Homeland.

87. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, what are the long-term consequences if these funding gaps persist beyond this fiscal year?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Long-term persistent funding gaps in INDOPACOM will impact the Joint Force's ability to defend U.S. territories and interests in the Pacific, hinder the development of kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities and slow the advancement of ISR and C2 systems.

88. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, are there any inefficiencies within the DOD budget that could be reallocated to meet INDOPACOM's needs?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will support the Department's efforts to analyze the budget for wasteful and low impact programs with the intent to reallocate resourcing to meet the Department's strategic goals.

LOYALTY AND CONSTITUTIONAL DUTY

89. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you respond if given an order that falls in a legal gray area but is politically charged?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I will consult with relevant counsel, and I will not follow an unlawful order. I am bound by my oath to follow all lawful orders.

90. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, can you provide an example from your career where you had to push back against unlawful or unethical directives?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, I have not been issued an unlawful or unethical directive during my previous tours in the service.

91. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, what steps would you take to reinforce the apolitical nature of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, if confirmed, I commit to speaking truth to power, regardless of politics and upholding the standards of conduct contained in my Commission, my Oath of Office and the Constitution.

ALLIES AND PARTNERS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

92. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you enhance military-to-military cooperation with key allies like Japan and Australia?

Lieutenant General CAINE. For Japan, if confirmed, I would support the current actions, as recently reported in the news following the Secretary of Defense's trip. These include pursuing concrete steps to deepen defense cooperation with Japan across a range of areas, such as enhancing bilateral training and exercises, strengthening Alliance force posture and presence and promoting defense equipment and technology cooperation.

For Australia I would continue to support engagements, exercises and interoperability, examine United States force posture initiatives, and support broader United States initiatives such as AUKUS and defense industrial collaboration.

93. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, what role do you see emerging partners (e.g., India, the Philippines) playing in countering Chinese aggression?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I agree with the President and Secretary of Defense's statements concerning the importance of allies and partners playing a leading role in providing for their own defense. If confirmed, I would examine how the military can best support United States policy, to include increasing interoperability, expanding joint and combined operations, and making targeted activities and investments that provide measurable returns on investment in their defense capabilities.

94. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you navigate tensions between allies who have differing threat perceptions of China?

Lieutenant General CAINE. While our allies may have differing threat perceptions of China, they share our vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary to advance this shared understanding among our allies while taking into account any differences in perspectives.

95. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, how can the DOD improve joint military exercises to enhance interoperability with regional partners?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Currently, Combatant Commands regularly exercise and train with their regional allies and partners. One area where the DOD has improved and can continue to improve joint military exercise interoperability is by leveraging our annual Large Scale Global Exercise (LSGE), a series of multiple Field Training Exercises that occur within a 90-day window. As part of ELITE CONSTELLATION, a multi-year Joint Force global integration readiness campaign, LSGE consists of large-scale training and exercises that validate joint and combined interoperability; improve joint force readiness; and provide a venue for future force design, testing, and evaluation. LSGE demonstrates United States, Allied and Partner military capacity and capability to deter great power adversaries. The Joint Force will conduct the FY25 LSGE in the USINDOPACOM AOR with multiple, global linkages to other Combatant Command exercises and multiple, integrated joint/combined major force elements.

Additionally, DOD, through the Combatant Commands, can use 10 USC Section 321 "Training with friendly foreign countries: payment of training and exercise expenses" to enhance interoperability of United States Forces with allies and partners. Section 321 authorizes Combatant Commands to pay incremental expenses of participating developing nations when training in exercises alongside United States Forces. These exercises enhance interoperability with allies and partners by increasing the scale and frequency of partner engagements, benefiting the United States and improving allied burden sharing over the long term.

96. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, how do you view the current United States force posture of 28,500 servicemembers in South Korea?

Lieutenant General CAINE. An increasingly aggressive China poses both short and long-term challenges, along with North Korea's long-range missile and nuclear programs represent an immediate security challenge. If confirmed, I will assess the

United States Military presence in the Indo-Pacific against our national strategic interests and make recommendations to the SecDef and the President.

97. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, are you open to removing troops from South Korea?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will work closely with USINDOPACOM, United States Forces Korea, South Korea, and other regional allies to review the United States force posture in South Korea and provide my recommendations.

98. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, if so, how many?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will work closely with USINDOPACOM, United States Forces Korea, South Korea, and other regional allies to review the United States force posture in South Korea and provide my recommendations.

OVERALL DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE STRATEGIC VISION

99. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, what do you see as the greatest challenge facing the United States Military over the next decade?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I believe the greatest challenge facing the United States Military over the next decade is China's rapid modernization and expansion of its military capabilities.

100. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you balance traditional military deterrence with emerging domains like cyber and space warfare?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Balancing traditional military deterrence with emerging domains like cyber and space requires integrating both established and modern capabilities. Traditional deterrence focuses on strength and military readiness, while space and cyber are about resilience and competition. These domains are crucial to our security, as they support military and economic infrastructure. Protecting space and cyber capabilities is vital for maintaining credible deterrence. If confirmed, I will actively work to normalize operations in these emerging domains alongside traditional operations, prioritizing warfighting and protecting the Joint Force.

101. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, in your view, what is the most significant misalignment between U.S. defense strategy and budgetary allocations?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Implementing the National Defense Strategy requires rigorous prioritization to resource the critical capabilities necessary to achieve the Nation's strategic objectives.

Congressional support through timely and sustained appropriations and budget flexibility is crucial for aligning resources with the Department's defense strategy.

MODERNIZATION AND INNOVATION

102. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Caine, you mentioned your experience in the venture capital world as a unique asset for modernizing business systems and revitalizing the Defense Industrial Base. How would you leverage that experience to accelerate innovation, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI), cyber warfare, and emerging technologies?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, we need to establish a process to allow our IT and business systems to onboard critical emerging technologies and the authorities to operate at a much faster pace. We will occasionally fail, but that is a part of quick and thoughtful innovation.

103. Lieutenant General Caine, if confirmed, how will you support initiatives like Replicator, which is focused on accelerating the delivery of critical joint capabilities to the warfighter at speed and scale?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Joint Staff is supportive of initiatives like Replicator and has specifically supported Replicator since its inception through joint experimentation, joint requirements, and congressional engagement. I intend for the Joint Staff to continue to provide this support to accelerate the delivery of critical joint capabilities to the warfighter.

104. Lieutenant General Caine, what do you see as the Joint Staff's role in rapidly delivering innovative and commercial capabilities to the warfighter?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Joint Staff ensures capabilities are founded on Joint Requirements, to ensure warfighters receive solutions that fill Joint

Warfighting needs. The Joint Staff also conducts joint experimentation to provide capabilities that are optimized for the Joint fight. Both of these functions also facilitate the Joint Emergent/Urgent Operational Needs (JEON/JUON) processes, which are designed to rapidly deliver capabilities to the warfighter in response to Combatant Command operational needs. The Joint Staff and the Chairman, as the Global Integrator, represent the voice of the Joint Warfighter in the reform conversation.

JOINT FORCE READINESS

105. Lieutenant General Caine, given the increasing threats from peer competitors and the challenges posed by a protracted conflict, how would you ensure that the Joint Force maintains a high level of readiness while balancing resource constraints?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will carefully weigh my advice and recommendations against the priorities of the Nation Defense Strategy (NDS) and recommend prudent use of the Joint Force in order to preserve readiness for our highest priority threats.

CHINA STRATEGY

106. Lieutenant General Caine, you noted that China poses a growing threat in the Indo-Pacific. What military strategies do you believe will be most effective in deterring China's aggression while avoiding escalation into open conflict?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will undertake a thorough review of the Chinese threat in the Indo-Pacific and develop my recommendations for appropriate military strategies.

COMBATANT COMMAND COORDINATION

107. Lieutenant General Caine, you have strong relationships with combatant commanders. How would you ensure effective coordination between commands while avoiding bureaucratic inefficiencies or conflicts over jurisdiction?

Lieutenant General CAINE. In my 34 years of military service, I have led warfighters in a variety of roles across the Joint Force and Interagency. I have built a global perspective on the challenges America faces in achieving effective deterrence against our adversaries. Each of these experiences has prepared me for the humbling responsibility of serving as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and as the global integrator. If confirmed, I will continue to work with Combatant Commanders and Service Chiefs to ensure effective coordination.

PERSONNEL AND RECRUITING CHALLENGES

108. Lieutenant General Caine, recruiting and retention remain critical challenges for the Armed Forces. What new approaches would you consider to strengthen recruitment, particularly among younger generations with shifting career expectations?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Recruiting the next generation of servicemembers is a national imperative. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Services to ensure our approach reflects the realities of today's competitive labor market. The Joint Force depends on the talent, drive, and dedication found in America's sons and daughters to meet the challenges of the 21st century. I will support efforts across the Department to strengthen recruiting and ensure our force remains ready, capable, and representative of the Nation we serve.

MILITARY ADVICE AND POLICY DISAGREEMENTS

109. Lieutenant General Caine, you emphasized providing apolitical military advice. Can you share an example from your career where your advice differed from civilian leadership's priorities, and how you handled that situation?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, in my last role as the Associate Director for Military Affairs at CIA I would often present a range of options for Director Burns and Deputy Director Cohen to consider. If asked to provide my recommendation I would do so. Once a decision was made by my civilian leaders my job became the implementation of that decision. If confirmed I will continue with this tradition and the associated standard of conduct.

WARRIOR ETHOS AND CULTURE

110. Lieutenant General Caine, you emphasized the importance of a strong warrior ethos and clear standards. How do you balance maintaining high military

standards with evolving societal expectations regarding diversity, inclusion, and personnel policies?

Lieutenant General CAINE. We don't have much of a military without the incredible 2.8 million members of the Joint Force that selflessly joined the service to do something more important than themselves. If confirmed, I think it's an opportunity for me to be another voice of encouragement for those young men and women who have the capability and meet the standards to come into the service and do something that they will forever hold so high in their history. The chance to serve this Nation is a special privilege for those of us that have come into the cloth of our Nation and served, and I hope that I'll be able to encourage others to do so.

LESSONS FROM PAST CONFLICTS

111. Lieutenant General Caine, given your experience in combat and strategic roles, what key lessons from past conflicts—such as Iraq, Afghanistan, or Ukraine—do you believe should shape United States Military planning moving forward?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, warfighting at scale is quickly progressing. We are now facing kinetic exchanges with significantly more rounds per hour than we have ever seen before. Mass and simultaneity are real threats, and we must evolve our warfighting approach to meet the mass challenges we will face. Autonomy and AI are all a part of this. Actions in space and cyber are now the norm and we must evolve our holistic warfighting approach in an ever more joint, coalition, and interoperable way to win on the battlefields of the future.

ALLIED AND PARTNER COORDINATION

112. Lieutenant General Caine, with the emphasis on working with allies and partners to deter adversaries, what steps would you take to strengthen military interoperability and joint planning with key allies such as NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], Japan, and Australia?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will undertake a thorough review of the military situation in Europe and the Indo-Pacific and, informed by the President and the Secretary's guidance, develop my recommendations for specific steps we should take to strengthen military interoperability and joint planning with key allies.

INDEPENDENCE OF UNIFORMED MILITARY ATTORNEYS

113. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you ensure that uniformed military attorneys are shielded from external pressures that could compromise their legal advice?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, IAW 10 USC 156, there is a Legal Counsel selected by a board of officers who is an independent legal advisor to me. The statute specifically states that "[n]o officer or employee of the Department of Defense may interfere with the ability of the Legal Counsel to give independent legal advice to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to the Joint Chiefs of Staff." I will work closely with my LC and his team as I prepare my military advice for the Secretary of Defense and the President.

114. Lieutenant General Caine, can you provide an example from your career where you upheld the independence of military attorneys in a challenging situation?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, there were several examples during the assignment at the Joint Special Operations Command where a legal counsel's opinion shaped the outcome of a particular tactical operation. This was a routine event, and I greatly respect and appreciate the counsel that I have had.

STRATEGIC GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

115. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you ensure seamless integration and coordination between the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and National Military Strategy?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will first work with the Secretary of Defense to have clear processes and governance in place for the Joint Force to implement United States strategies. I will ensure the Joint Force leaders have a shared understanding of the President and SecDef's priorities and guidance across their missions and responsibilities, including from the NSS, NDS, and NMS. To maintain integration throughout strategy implementation, I will review the existing processes for the Joint Force to implement the strategies and cyclically assess progress and risk.

116. Lieutenant General Caine, what mechanisms would you implement to improve compliance with strategic guidance documents across DOD components?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will review existing processes for reporting and assessing progress against strategic guidance and make recommendations to the Secretary of Defense if I determine changes are necessary. I will work with Joint Force leaders to maintain shared understanding of strategic guidance and risks to executing the National Defense Strategy and National Military Strategy. I will make necessary changes to Joint Staff processes to ensure we maintain a global perspective and can provide military options to the Secretary of Defense and President, aligned to their strategic guidance.

117. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you address potential conflicts or misalignment between the President's National Security Strategy and the Secretary of Defense's National Defense Strategy?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will advise and provide recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and President on any potential conflicts or misalignment between the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy.

118. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you measure the effectiveness of the Chairman's Risk Assessment in shaping defense policy?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Identifying risk to our strategic guidance helps us determine what resources and authorities to pursue to achieve the policies of the department and the administration. If confirmed, I will seek to maximize effectiveness of the Chairman's Risk Assessment by aligning the risk assessed with other strategic documents created by the Joint Staff that inform the budget and Defense Planning Guidance. Effectiveness is in part measured by whether the risks and gaps identified are addressed in the DPG and the President's budget. As such, based on my military assessments, we will partner with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for DOD's budget submissions and legislative proposals.

If confirmed, I look forward to briefing my risk assessment to Congress in 2026 to inform the congressional budgeting process.

USE OF MILITARY FORCE

119. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you balance military effectiveness with legal and ethical considerations when recommending rules of engagement?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The President, as Commander-in-Chief, determines when to use military force. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are advisors to the President and the Secretary of Defense and should actively advise on the policies for the use of military force and the rules of engagement. If confirmed, my recommendations to the President and Secretary of Defense on the use of military force will be consistent with U.S. domestic and international law. Additionally, I would consider the probability of success, cost in terms of casualties, and strategic risk.

120. Lieutenant General Caine, what role do you see emerging technologies (e.g., AI, autonomous systems) playing in shaping future rules of engagement?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Emerging technologies offer the potential to revolutionize warfare and delivering those capabilities in a timely manner will continue to posture the Joint force for success on the modern battlefield. If confirmed, I would serve as one of the tri-chairs with OSD on the DODD 3000.09 Senior Review Board (SRB), which reviews autonomous capabilities with a focus on minimizing the probability and consequences of failures in autonomous and semi-autonomous weapon systems.

121. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you ensure that U.S. Forces are properly trained and equipped to operate under evolving rules of engagement?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The CJCS must ensure the military's ROE are regularly reviewed and updated in response to changing geopolitical environments, threats, and legal considerations. This review involves working closely with senior defense officials, legal advisors, and policymakers to ensure ROE are adapted as needed. These updates should be disseminated throughout the military leadership chain ensuring alignment with the broader strategic objectives and national defense priorities. The CJCS should ensure training programs for all servicemembers are continuously updated to include ROE considerations. These updates involve incorporating ROE into combat and mission planning, simulation exercises, and real-world operations. The training should cover not just the "how" of engaging targets, but also the "why," emphasizing the strategic, ethical, and legal imperatives behind the rules.

COLLECTIVE SELF-DEFENSE

122. Lieutenant General Caine, what specific criteria would you use to determine which allied forces qualify for U.S. collective self-defense support?

Lieutenant General CAINE. When collective self-defense rules of engagement are authorized, United States Forces may defend foreign forces against any attack or threat of imminent attack. If confirmed, I will consider the legal basis of the request, necessity and proportionality, alignment with U.S. interests, and operational circumstances of the request. If confirmed, I will review these factors before I make any recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and President.

123. Lieutenant General Caine, how do you see collective self-defense fitting into broader U.S. deterrence strategies?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Collective self-defense is a cornerstone of broader U.S. deterrence strategies. It demonstrates a commitment to protecting allies, which strengthens partnerships and deters adversaries from attacking weaker States. Additionally, it shows the U.S. is willing to act decisively in defense of its allies, bolstering our credibility and thereby increasing deterrence. Additionally, it fosters a sense of shared responsibility and burden-sharing among allies, encouraging them to invest in their own defense and deterrence strategies. If confirmed, I will consider what our partners are doing to deter shared threats before making a recommendation to the Secretary of Defense and President.

TITLE 50 AUTHORITIES

124. Lieutenant General Caine, how do you assess the current effectiveness of title 50 authorities in enabling interagency cooperation in military operations?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Based on my experience, the current title 50 authorities are highly effective in enabling interagency cooperation in military operations. Title 50 actions have a proven track record of success in providing the needed intelligence support to make our military operations more effective. If confirmed I will continue to collaborate and leverage the interagency to pursue U.S. interests globally.

125. Lieutenant General Caine, under what circumstances would you advocate for changes or modifications to title 50 authorities?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If changes or modifications are required to support maximizing the effectiveness of military operations in support of U.S. interests, I will advocate on the issue.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES AND CIVILIAN HARM AND MITIGATION

126. Lieutenant General Caine, what steps would you take to improve data-sharing policies to facilitate timely investigations of civilian casualties?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I would seek to improve data-sharing by supporting efforts that balance efficiency with security and accountability.

127. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you ensure that findings from civilian casualty investigations are effectively used to refine operational practices and reduce future risks?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I would support ensuring effective utilization of civilian casualty investigation findings by pursuing a systematic approach that integrates analysis, implementation, and continuous monitoring.

128. Lieutenant General Caine, the Joint Staff plays a crucial role in implementing the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response (CHMR) Action Plan (CHMR-AP), including incorporating CHMR into joint doctrine, planning, and operations and ensuring that efforts to mitigate civilian harm are considered in all phases of military operations. If confirmed, how will you continue to advance and resource these efforts?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will comply with statutory requirements and carry out the guidance set forth in DOD policy on CHMR.

129. Lieutenant General Caine, how will you implement civilian harm and mitigation response efforts in security cooperation initiatives and programs with allies and partners?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will comply with statutory requirements and carry out the guidance set forth in DOD policy on CHMR. I will examine

and provide my military advice on incorporating civilian harm risk assessment and mitigation methods into DOD security cooperation efforts.

JOINT FORCE OPERATIONS AND EXPERIMENTATION

130. Lieutenant General Caine, how do you foresee joint force experimentation contributing to overcoming anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) threats?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Addressing the challenge posed by anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) capabilities is a critical priority for the Joint Force. Joint force experimentation plays a vital role in understanding and mitigating these threats. I would assess that a focused experimentation campaign, centered on threat-based concepts of employment, is essential to identifying and refining the capabilities needed to maintain our warfighter advantage.

Specifically, experimentation allows us to evaluate emerging technologies and innovative approaches to overcome A2/AD systems, and to articulate critical capability requirements for future development. This is important as competitors continue to advance their systems to defeat ours and we must constantly experiment and adapt to stay ahead. From experimentation with technology to experimenting with new operating approaches, the Joint Force can only be ready if we constantly adapt to the changing character of war.

131. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you ensure that lessons from joint experimentation are effectively translated into operational capabilities?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Joint Staff has established a process to translate the Joint Warfighting Concept into needed capabilities. This includes identifying key requirements, prioritizing those needing acceleration, and coordinating with the Services through Joint Capability Integration and Development System (JCIDS) and the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) to assign development leads. Recognizing the need for speed, the Joint Staff is continuously reviewing these processes to identify capabilities that should be accelerated. We are also increasing end-user involvement in experimentation to better align capabilities with operational needs and facilitate smoother transitions.

Translating experimental lessons into operational capabilities remains challenging. A collaborative approach with OSD, Combatant Commands, and the Services is essential. We focus on identifying materiel and non-materiel solutions through rigorous experimentation and field demonstrations, informing investment recommendations. We will continue supporting Joint Staff-led collaboration venues and prioritizing coordination with stakeholders to ensure effective implementation and Joint Force integration of new capabilities.

132. Lieutenant General Caine, what role should private sector innovation play in joint experimentation efforts?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Private sector innovation is crucial for DOD joint experimentation. It accelerates technology integration, reduces development time, and fosters dual-use applications. Collaboration enables rapid prototyping, testing, and burden-sharing. Aligning private sector investment with DOD needs and incorporating warfighter feedback ensures technologies meet operational requirements. Frequent communication and iterative development are key to successful partnerships.

JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING

133. Lieutenant General Caine, given the short warning times for potential conflicts, do you believe the current model for standing up Joint Force Headquarters is sufficient?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Proactively establishing subordinate Joint Force headquarters before a crisis erupts could indeed enhance operational readiness, planning, and preparedness. However, this must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. A thorough analysis is crucial to determine when the benefits of early establishment outweigh the potential costs.

134. Lieutenant General Caine, how would you assess the tradeoffs between maintaining a standing Joint Force Headquarters versus activating them in a time of crisis?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Existing structures leverages the proven capabilities of service components and their ability to function as JTFs, provides flexibility and responsiveness to address a wide range of potential crises but they take time to transition to full JTFs. Meanwhile, standby JTFs are ready but comes with costs such as manpower allocation, staff workload, and financial implications.

135. Lieutenant General Caine, what metrics would you use to determine the effectiveness of a Joint Force Headquarters in executing contingency plans?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will evaluate the Department's lessons learned and best practices from recent operations and exercises to establish metrics and measures of effectiveness to guide future use of Joint Force Headquarters during contingencies.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

ETHICS

136. Lieutenant General Caine, 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) at DOD or any of its components for 4 years after leaving DOD?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Senator, if confirmed I will continue to comply with DOD Ethics regulations and guidance. As I did in my first retirement, I have no intent to lobby. I am focused on the job at hand—if confirmed.

137. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No.

138. Lieutenant General Caine, 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.

Lieutenant General CAINE. I was not approached about my loyalty to the President. My loyalty remains in the oath I have upheld for 34 years, the oath to support and defend the Constitution. I was never asked a single loyalty question during my interview process.

139. Lieutenant General Caine, if you were approached about your loyalty to President Trump, did you make any verbal representations of loyalty? If so, please describe this representation.

Lieutenant General CAINE. I was not approached about my loyalty to the President. My loyalty remains in the oath I have upheld for 34 years, the oath to support and defend the Constitution. I was never asked a single loyalty question during my interview process.

140. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I don't know who Boris Epshteyn is nor have I met anyone by that name.

141. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I don't know who Boris Epshteyn is nor have I met anyone by that name.

142. Lieutenant General Caine, 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.

Lieutenant General CAINE. I don't know who Boris Epshteyn is nor have I met anyone by that name.

143. Lieutenant General Caine, if you own any defense contractor stock, will you divest it to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed and pursuant to ethics guidance issued to me by the Department, I will instruct my financial advisor to comply with any/all legal guidance from ethics counsel on any defense related holdings.

144. Lieutenant General Caine, what do you consider the role of the press in a democracy?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The press plays an essential role in informing the American public. In a democracy, access to timely and accurate information builds trust and understanding between the military and the citizens we serve. If confirmed, I will support efforts to ensure the Joint Staff communicates clearly and credibly, while staying aligned with civilian leadership and respecting the responsibilities of the services and combatant commands.

145. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

146. Lieutenant General Caine, have you ever 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.

Lieutenant General CAINE. No.

147. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No.

148. Lieutenant General Caine, will you voluntarily release any individual from any such agreements before a committee vote on your nomination?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I have no such agreements in place with anyone.

149. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I have not.

150. Lieutenant General Caine, if the answer to question above was yes, how much was promised, how much was paid, and what were the circumstances?

Lieutenant General CAINE. None of the applicable answers were "Yes"

151. Lieutenant General Caine, will you commit to recuse yourself from all particular matters involving your former clients and employers for at least 4 years?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I will comply with any/all legal guidance provided to me by the DOD Office of Ethics and if appropriate pursuant to that guidance recuse myself. At this time, I do not believe that I have any particular matters or concerns that would fit this situation.

152. Lieutenant General Caine, were you at any time, or are you currently, contacted by or under investigation or review by any inspector general personnel for any reason?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No.

DOMESTIC DEPLOYMENT

153. Lieutenant General Caine, if confirmed will you make sure the public knows as much as practicable why and under what authorities the Guard is being deployed domestically?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Chief of the National Guard Bureau and other senior leaders to ensure there is clarity, both inside and outside the Department, regarding the role, authority, and purpose behind National Guard deployments. While those deployment decisions are made by civilian leaders or Governors, the Joint Staff plays an important role in ensuring consistent and accurate communication. I will support efforts to inform the public, to the extent practicable, when significant changes occur in how or why the Guard is being used domestically, always in coordination with the appropriate authorities.

154. Lieutenant General Caine, if confirmed will you make sure the public knows as much as practicable when there are significant changes in why and under what authorities the Guard is being deployed domestically?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Chief of the National Guard Bureau and other senior leaders to ensure there is clarity, both inside and outside the Department, regarding the role, authority, and purpose behind National Guard deployments. While those deployment decisions are made by civilian leaders or Governors, the Joint Staff plays an important role in ensuring consistent and accurate communication. I will support efforts to inform the public, to the extent practicable, when significant changes occur in how or why the Guard is being used domestically, always in coordination with the appropriate authorities.

155. Lieutenant General Caine, do you support the Department of Homeland Security submitting requests for assistance at the southwest border from the Department of Defense and the National Guard at least 180 days in advance?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I commit to providing as much notice as possible servicemembers, particularly for members of the National Guard who must make plans with employers and others before deploying anywhere.

156. Lieutenant General Caine, what benefits could advance notice from the Department of Homeland Security provide for readiness and national security?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Early notification of requirements enables the Joint Force to strategically plan for deployments, improving readiness by synchronizing training and modernization schedules with operational needs.

157. Lieutenant General Caine, Department of Defense Directive 3025.18 “Defense Support of Civil Authorities” and Department of Defense Instruction 3025.21 “Defense Support of Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies,” and Joint Publication 3–28 “Defense Support to Civil Authorities” provide doctrine for planning, conducting, and assess defense support of civil authorities. If confirmed, will you evaluate whether those policy documents provide sufficient clarity, including on emergency authorities, and provide your assessment to this committee?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

158. Lieutenant General Caine, Department of Defense Directive 3025.18 “Defense Support of Civil Authorities” and Department of Defense Instruction 3025.21 “Defense Support of Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies,” and Joint Publication 3–28 “Defense Support to Civil Authorities” provide doctrine for planning, conducting, and assess defense support of civil authorities. If confirmed, will you evaluate whether those policy documents provide procedures to inform the public about the authorities, mission, and duration for domestic deployments and provide your assessment to this committee?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

159. Lieutenant General Caine, what is your understanding of the training provided to the National Guard for Federal standing rules for the use of force on domestic military deployments?

Lieutenant General CAINE. National Guard personnel receive training from their service post mobilization on training requirements provided by the Combatant Command. After the service ensures the training is completed, they validate these units to support their assigned mission. Additionally, our National Guard forces conduct a handover with the unit currently conducting the mission to both mitigate risk and ensure they are prepared for execution. As a part of this process, units receive training on the Federal standing rules for the use of force (SRUF).

160. Lieutenant General Caine, is there any distinction in the standing rules of force for the National Guard during domestic military deployments when in “title 10” status versus when operating under State or “title 32” status?

Lieutenant General CAINE. While our National Guard forces always have the inherent right to self-defense, there is a distinction in the standing rules for the use of force for the National Guard during domestic military operations when in Title 10 status versus when operating under State or Title 32 status. While in a Title 10 status, National Guard members will not participate in domestic law enforcement activities, unless they are actively covered by an exception to the Posse Comitatus Act.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT AND TRANSPARENCY

161. Lieutenant General Caine, what is your understanding of the role of the Department of Defense Inspector General and service Inspectors General?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Department of Defense Inspector General (DoD IG) and Service Inspectors General play a crucial role in maintaining accountability and integrity within the DOD by conducting audits, investigations, and evaluations to prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse, while promoting economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

162. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

163. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

164. Lieutenant General Caine, if you are confirmed, will you commit to refusing to follow illegal orders from any individual, including the President?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

165. Lieutenant General Caine, what actions would you take if you were given an illegal order from any individual, including the President?

Lieutenant General CAINE. I do not expect to be given an illegal order. For all orders given to me from the President and the Secretary of Defense, I will work closely with my staff, including my independent legal counsel, to best advise the President and Secretary of Defense on the way forward in response to those orders.

166. Lieutenant General Caine, will you commit to testify or provide a deposition if you are called upon by Congress to testify or provide a deposition voluntarily?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

167. Lieutenant General Caine, will you commit to testify or provide a deposition to Congress if you are issued a subpoena to testify or provide a deposition?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

168. Lieutenant General Caine, will you commit to providing information or documents to Congress voluntarily if you are requested to do so?

Lieutenant General CAINE. In accordance with all applicable laws and regulations, I will provide information or documents voluntarily to Congress if requested to do so.

169. Lieutenant General Caine, will you provide information or documents to Congress if you are issued a subpoena?

Lieutenant General CAINE. In accordance with all applicable laws and regulations, I will provide information or documents to Congress if issued a subpoena.

170. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

171. Lieutenant General Caine, if confirmed, will you commit to posting your official calendar monthly?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I commit to conducting a security review to ensure OPSEC before I publicly release any information.

172. Lieutenant General Caine, do you think the DOD has an over-classification problem?

Lieutenant General CAINE. While there is always room for improvement in our classification processes and procedures, the Joint Force regularly writes for release and utilizes classification markings at the lowest classification levels to ensure dissemination to the widest audience in a timely manner.

173. Lieutenant General Caine, if confirmed, do you think DOD should pursue strategic technology to support automated declassification?

Lieutenant General CAINE. From the Joint Force perspective, while Artificial Intelligence (AI) holds extraordinary potential to support declassification requirements, we must ensure we adhere to existing legal, cybersecurity, information, operational security, and classification policies and authorities. Generative AI models can provide an initial review of documents to highlight availability for declassification and any potential areas of concern if the information is declassified. However, AI models do not check for truth in outputs and can potentially carry forward inaccuracies inherent in the data inputs; therefore, these technologies should be used to augment, rather than replace a human at this time.

PROJECT 2025

174. Lieutenant General Caine, 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.

Lieutenant General CAINE. No.

175. Lieutenant General Caine, 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.

Lieutenant General CAINE. I have not.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

176. Lieutenant General Caine, how do you think increasing our nuclear weapons spending will impact our adversaries' interest in doing the same?

Lieutenant General CAINE. While Russian and Chinese nuclear decisionmaking is driven by multiple factors, a marked increase in United States nuclear weapons spending would likely be perceived by Russia and China as a potential threat to strategic stability, prompting them to bolster their own nuclear capabilities. Russia views its nuclear capabilities as mostly in parity with the United States and would view a significant increase in spending as a threat to that parity. China is already expanding its forces to ensure the capability to survive a first strike and respond with the threat of unacceptable damage—increased United States spending may spur further modernization efforts to meet their nuclear objectives. However, United States spending is unlikely to significantly influence North Korea and Iran's nuclear ambitions as they are driven by their own strategic goals.

177. Lieutenant General Caine, how do you think our adversaries would interpret the United States resuming live fire nuclear weapons testing?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Our adversaries would likely interpret the United States resuming live fire nuclear weapons testing as threatening, provocative, and destabilizing and a possible justification to do the same. Russia and China could consider similar tests in response, while North Korea and Iran would see it as a justification for their own nuclear actions and preparations. All four countries would likely use the situation to criticize the United States and justify their own defensive measures.

178. Lieutenant General Caine, which conventional weapons should be cut to pay for nuclear modernization or missile defense systems?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will lead an analysis to find more deployable capital, through which we can do in three ways: find efficiencies through cost savings, reprogram internally, or increase our topline.

FOREIGN INFLUENCE

179. Lieutenant General Caine, have you received any payment from a foreign government or entity controlled by a foreign government within the past 5 years?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No.

180. Lieutenant General Caine, have you communicated with any foreign government or entity controlled by a foreign government within the past 5 years?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No.

181. Lieutenant General Caine, 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.

Lieutenant General CAINE. I remain personal friends with a group of Senior Leaders from our Allies and Partners that I met during my time in uniform. Many of these senior leaders remain in the military of their governments. None of these agreements have a financial component to them and all are based on pre-existing USG MIL-MIL relationships. If confirmed and I reenter the military I will disclose them as part of my security re-entry as I always have.

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT

182. Lieutenant General Caine, 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 the military?

Lieutenant General CAINE. One incident of sexual assault or sexual harassment in the U.S. Armed Forces is too many. I understand that prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment decreased in 2023 in the Armed Forces for the first time in several years. More must be done to sustain these changes. If confirmed, I will continue to vigorously support policies and programs to reduce the occurrence of sexual assault, improve support to victims, and hold offenders appropriately accountable.

183. Lieutenant General Caine, how should DOD support and protect your department servicemembers, civilians, grantees, and contractors who come forward with reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Congress has granted us robust authorities to ensure that we can assist sexual assault and sexual harassment victims, hold offenders appropriately accountable, and prevent these crimes. Joint Force readiness hinges on the preparedness of our warfighters, which is most effectively achieved within cohesive units led by empowered chains of command. It is imperative to foster healthy command climates and prevent harmful behaviors. To this end I support applying the resources provided to us for this purpose, which include our prevention and response workforces and our regular assessments of military unit health worldwide. I am committed to ensuring our people receive support and resources that are trauma-informed, responsive to need, and recovery-oriented.

RETALIATION AND PROTECTING WHISTLEBLOWERS

184. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

185. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No.

186. Lieutenant General Caine, if you are confirmed, will you commit to protecting whistleblowers? If so, please specify how you will do so.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

CIVILIAN HARM

187. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

188. Lieutenant General Caine, what is your understanding of title 10 U.S.C. 184, which established the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Title 10 U.S.C. 184 establishes the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence (CP CoE) as a specialized military organization that serves as the Department of Defense's primary institution for advancing civilian protection capabilities. The center operates as a hub and facilitator of Department-wide analysis,

learning, and strategic approaches to civilian harm mitigation and response during military operations.

189. Lieutenant General Caine, the United States 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 United States 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

190. Lieutenant General Caine, if you are confirmed, what do you understand to be your role and responsibilities regarding civilian harm mitigation and response?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I understand my role and responsibilities as outlined in statutory requirements and DOD policy is to prioritize and integrate capability requirements to support the Joint Force's ability to mitigate and respond to civilian harm by ensuring CHMR learning and training objectives are incorporated into joint education, training, strategies, plans, exercises, and operations.

191. Lieutenant General Caine, what do you understand to be the importance of mitigating civilian harm in military operations?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Mitigating civilian harm in military operations results in more efficient and effective mission-set that retains the freedom of the joint force to maneuver in host nations, establishing trust and security of the local population, and the protection of the joint force.

192. Lieutenant General Caine, what value can advisors with expertise in civilian harm mitigation and response provide to commanders?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Civilian harm mitigation and response advisors provide commanders with crucial data on the civilian environment, tailored mitigation advice, and enhanced understanding of the impact of operations on civilians, preserving the commander's vital decision space.

193. Lieutenant General Caine, if you are confirmed, will you commit to supporting and protecting the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I am committed to carrying out all statutory requirements of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the roles and responsibilities placed upon me and my staff by the Secretary of Defense.

194. Lieutenant General Caine, how will you prevent and mitigate civilian harm?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will provide the President and Secretary of Defense with expert military advice and implement guidance to mitigate civilian harm, in accordance with DOD policy and the Chairman's responsibilities.

195. Lieutenant General Caine, if you are confirmed, will you commit to supporting and implementing the Civilian Harm Mitigation Response and Action Plan (CHMR-AP)?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I am committed to carrying out all statutory requirements of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the roles and responsibilities placed upon me and my staff by the Secretary of Defense.

196. Lieutenant General Caine, do you believe that our troops are at higher risk for retribution as the number of civilian deaths from United States Military operations or U.S.-led military operations increases?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Terrorist groups like al Qaeda and ISIS will continue to exploit galvanizing events, such as the Israel-HAMAS conflict, which they link to the United States, and the 2023 Quran burnings in Sweden and the Netherlands, to inspire supporters worldwide. The United States has been consistent in policy to mitigate unintended or incidental damage or injury to civilian or noncombatant persons or property or the environment and we have policies to assist commanders in weighing risks against military necessity and in evaluating proportionality within the framework of the joint planning process.

RIGHT-TO-REPAIR

197. Lieutenant General Caine, do you believe giving the DOD access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could advance the DOD's readiness?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, giving servicemembers access to all the training, technical data, and tooling necessary to repair and sustain our weapon systems would make a positive impact on overall readiness of the Joint Force.

198. Lieutenant General Caine, do you believe giving the DOD access to the technical data rights needed to repair its own equipment could help reduce the DOD's repair and sustainment costs?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes, granting servicemembers access to technical data rights for repairing its own equipment could significantly reduce repair and sustainment costs. By enabling the DOD to perform repairs in-house, it would decrease reliance on external contractors, lower service fees, and allow for more efficient maintenance practices, ultimately leading to long-term cost savings.

199. Lieutenant General Caine, how should DOD ensure servicemembers who are stationed abroad can repair equipment in a timely and cost-effective manner, especially in a contested logistics environment?

Lieutenant General CAINE. To ensure servicemembers stationed abroad can repair equipment in a timely and cost-effective manner, especially in a contested logistics environment, the DOD should focus on pre-positioning critical repair parts and tools closest to the point of need, establishing local repair capabilities with trained personnel, and utilizing additive/advanced manufacturing for on-demand parts production. Additionally, enhancing partnerships with local industries and leveraging remote diagnostic technologies can reduce reliance on long supply chains and external support, improving operational readiness and minimizing delays in maintenance. We must also employ advanced manufacturing to expedite repairs at the forward edge.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

200. Lieutenant General Caine, does DOD benefit from partnering with colleges, universities, nonprofits, and federally funded research and development centers?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Department does benefit from collaborating with these entities. Research is the foundation of Joint Force design and development and underpins concept development, experimentation, and the fielding of the critical technologies and techniques that will deter or win in a future conflict. Colleges, universities, nonprofits, and federally funded research and development centers offer scope, scale, and collective expertise, all of which help advance. From the tactical to the strategic level, partnering with these centers is critical to the DOD's ability to bring the right technology to bear in order to deter and if needed, defeat a peer adversary.

Further, the U.S. faces a rapidly evolving security environment, making a swift and effective transition to advanced technology a DOD imperative. However, warfighters should be involved in the research process to ensure their operational experience informs decisionmaking and technology development. Events such as the FFRDC Summit in particular have broadened networks for warfighters (end-users), enabling a more rapid pull of relevant capabilities into operational environments from DOE and FFRDC Labs.

PROTECTING CLASSIFIED INFORMATION AND FEDERAL RECORDS

201. Lieutenant General Caine, what is your understanding of the need to protect operational security, or OPSEC?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Operational Security (OPSEC) is a critical aspect of protecting sensitive information and preventing adversaries from gaining an advantage.

202. Lieutenant General Caine, what are the national security risks of improperly disclosing classified information?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The national security risks of improperly disclosing classified information are significant. Depending on the classification of the information disclosed, and the unintended recipient, the consequences could include the compromise of operations, intelligence gathering, or international relationships.

203. Lieutenant General Caine, is it your opinion that information about imminent military targets is generally sensitive information that needs to be protected?
Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

204. Lieutenant General Caine, what would you do if you learned an official had improperly disclosed classified information?

Lieutenant General CAINE. In any situation of concern, I would immediately report it to my security officer and determine the best way ahead to minimize any potential risk to national security.

205. Lieutenant General Caine, what is your understanding of Government officials' duties under the Federal Records Act?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Federal Records Act requires government officials to ensure the creation, preservation, and proper management of Federal records.

206. Lieutenant General Caine, should classified information be shared on unclassified commercial systems?

Lieutenant General CAINE. No, classified information should not be shared on unclassified commercial systems.

207. Lieutenant General Caine, is it damaging to servicemembers' confidence in DOD 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The information domain is always a threat to our forces and we must always preserve the element of surprise.

208. Lieutenant General Caine, 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?

Lieutenant General CAINE. We should always preserve the element of surprise and that should translate across every information domain and format and never put our war fighters in any harm's way.

MEDICAL CAPACITY

209. Lieutenant General Caine, in your judgment, is the United States Military's medical system prepared to support large-scale combat operations?

Lieutenant General CAINE. One single capability is best understood in the context of the entire joint force requirement. I understand there is likely opportunity to improve the preparedness of the United States Military medical system to support military response to future challenges. If confirmed, I will look at medical readiness in the context of warfighting capabilities that the joint force projects and support efforts to assure we are ready to respond if necessary.

210. Lieutenant General Caine, if the United States Military's medical system is not prepared to support large-scale combat operations, what steps should DOD take to be adequately prepared?

Lieutenant General CAINE. As I learn more about the challenges facing the military health system, I will, if confirmed, formulate recommendations to minimize risk to the joint force.

EFFECT OF BORDER OPERATIONS ON READINESS AND MORALE

211. Lieutenant General Caine, if confirmed, will you provide to the committee within 60 days a list of any training exercises that have been delayed or canceled due to the recent deployments to the southern border or Guantanamo? Please provide the date and type of any affected training exercises and explain which units were impacted.

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

212. Lieutenant General Caine, is DOD separating units when sending personnel to the border or Guantanamo? If so, please explain the rationale for doing so, given evidence of how doing so from 2018–2020 harmed units' readiness.

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will review the deployment of personnel to the border or Guantanamo and review the 2018–2020 readiness findings to ensure we are instituting lessons learned and reducing impacts on readiness.

213. Lieutenant General Caine, the GAO previously found that “DOD has not defined what it considers to be a manageable impact on readiness.” How should DOD determine when an anticipated impact on readiness is “manageable”?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Impacts on readiness are usually determined by analyzing risk to mission and risk to force statements provided by the potentially affected Combatant Commands and the Military Departments. If confirmed, I will weigh the magnitude and nature of these risks relative to their probability as I provide my recommendations to the SecDef.

214. Lieutenant General Caine, how should DOD monitor the impact of the border deployment on troops’ morale?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The immediate frontline supervisors, Senior Enlisted Leaders, and Commanders have a direct responsibility for their soldiers, sailors, airman, marines, guardians, and sentinels on morale of all military members. If confirmed it is my obligation to provide clear mission intent and ensure that our members have everything, they need to complete their mission.

215. Lieutenant General Caine, will DOD commit to inform the Senate Armed Services Committee if it sees patterns of suicide, substance abuse, and other warning signs that the border operations are degrading servicemembers’ mental health?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes.

216. Lieutenant General Caine, how should DOD assess whether its southern border and Guantanamo operations are militarily effective?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The DOD is responding to a request for Assistance from the Department of Homeland Security. Since DHS is the lead Federal agency, DOD should work with DHS to assess the effectiveness of these operations based on DHS desired objectives and effects.

217. Lieutenant General Caine, what should DOD’s role be at the Migrant Operations Center (MOC) and Guantanamo’s Camp 6?

Lieutenant General CAINE. My understanding is that DOD is responding to an RFA from DHS and operating pursuant to a signed MOU between DOD and DHS. If confirmed, I will review DOD’s role at the MOC and Camp 6 and provide any recommendations to the SecDef.

218. Lieutenant General Caine, there are reports that DOD personnel are guarding migrants at Camp 6. Is this an appropriate use of servicemembers’ time and DOD resources?

Lieutenant General CAINE. My understanding is that DHS/ICE maintain legal and physical custody of the illegal aliens at Guantanamo Bay with DOD support. If confirmed, and I find that DOD personnel are guarding migrants I will report this to Congress.

CONDUCT AND CONDITIONS OF BORDER OPERATIONS

219. Lieutenant General Caine, what are the rules of engagement that govern each unit deployed to the border?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will review the current Rules for the Use of Force and provide any recommended changes to the SecDef and POTUS.

220. Lieutenant General Caine, are servicemembers authorized to use force at the border?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Unit commanders always retain the inherent right and obligation to exercise unit self-defense and receive training to make sound, legally grounded decisions in situations where the use of force may be necessary.

221. Lieutenant General Caine, in 2020, the DOD Inspector General found that some troops did not receive Standing Rules for the Use of Force (SRUF) training. Should troops receive this training?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Yes. Every servicemember must receive comprehensive and recurring Standing Rules for the Use of Force (SRUF) training.

222. Lieutenant General Caine, should servicemembers under DOD’s command be authorized to use force against unarmed civilians at the border?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The use of force, especially deadly force, against unarmed civilians is prohibited unless it is necessary to prevent imminent death or serious bodily harm to oneself or another person. While DOD personnel are trained

in techniques to de-escalate hostile situations, United States servicemembers always retain the right of self-defense.

223. Lieutenant General Caine, under what circumstances, if any, should servicemembers under DOD's command be authorized to make arrests at the border?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Servicemembers in a title 10 status are not authorized to make arrests at the border as this is a law enforcement function.

224. Lieutenant General Caine, how should DOD handle encounters with citizens at the border?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will review the current guidance and if appropriate make any recommended changes to the SecDef and POTUS. I also defer to DHS for questions concerning DHS operations.

225. Lieutenant General Caine, what should DOD's plan be for migrants held at Guantanamo whose home country will not accept their repatriation?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will review the current guidance and if appropriate make any recommended changes to the SecDef and POTUS. I also defer to DHS for questions concerning DHS operations.

226. Lieutenant General Caine, what should be DOD's plan for evacuating the MOC during extreme weather events?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will work with SOUTHCOM to understand their current evacuation plans for facilities at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay (NSGB).

227. Lieutenant General Caine, what government entities, if any, should conduct onsite inspections of Guantanamo's MOC and Camp 6?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Historically, the U.N. International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has had access to pertinent operations at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay. If confirmed, I will work with SOUTHCOM assess their current plan for inspections.

228. Lieutenant General Caine, how should DOD handle requests for access to the MOC or Camp 6 from legal service providers, humanitarian organizations, the press, or other members of the public?

Lieutenant General CAINE. If confirmed, I will work with SOUTHCOM to better understand the process for access to Naval Station Guantanamo Bay. I defer questions on specific requests to DHS / ICE as the lead Federal agency.

229. Lieutenant General Caine, how should DOD's facilitate migrants' access to counsel?

Lieutenant General CAINE. DOD is operating in support of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. DHS maintains custody and control of the migrants. DOD should facilitate migrants' access to counsel in accordance with the interdepartmental MOU between DHS and DOD and all U.S. laws and international obligations.

230. Lieutenant General Caine, what standards of care should DOD personnel be bound to provide at Guantanamo?

Lieutenant General CAINE. DOD is operating in support of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. DHS maintains custody and control of the migrants. DOD should be bound to the Standards of Care addendum to the interdepartmental MOU between DHS and DOD and all U.S. laws and international obligations.

231. Lieutenant General Caine, what emergency and non-emergency medical services should be provided to migrants at Guantanamo?

Lieutenant General CAINE. DOD is operating in support of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. DHS maintains custody and control of the migrants. DOD should provide medical services in accordance with the interdepartmental MOU between DHS and DOD and all U.S. laws and international obligations.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

232. Lieutenant General Caine, how do you plan to improve the military's recruitment efforts?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The Department's ability to attract, recruit, and assess a highly qualified force is a national imperative. If confirmed, I will work directly with the Services to drive connection with the American communities, demonstrate value in military service and build trust through quality interactions with today's youth. Our ability to recruit and retain high quality individuals is critical to sustaining a long-term strategic advantage over pacing threats and dynamic security environment.

233. Lieutenant General Caine, how do you plan to ensure that Americans of diverse backgrounds feel welcome to join the military?

Lieutenant General CAINE. The strength of the Joint Force comes from the character, competence, and commitment of those who serve, across all backgrounds. If confirmed, I will support efforts that ensure every qualified American sees military service as a place where they can belong, contribute, and lead. Upholding clear standards, reinforcing the warrior ethos, sense of unity, and fostering a culture of professionalism and respect are essential to attracting and retaining the talent we need to meet today's security challenges.

234. Lieutenant General Caine, in response to President Trump and Secretary Hegseth's efforts to eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), the military has canceled recruiting efforts with long-standing partners. The Army abandoned its long-standing partnership with the Black Engineer of the Year Awards, and the Navy, Air Force, and Space Force also pulled out of the event. The Army also ended a long-standing partnership with Ashley Hall, an all-girls prep school located in South Carolina and which existed during the first Trump administration. Why are partnerships with organizations like these important for our ability to recruit individuals to the military?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Partnerships like these help us connect with high-performing individuals who might not otherwise consider military service. If confirmed, I will support recruiting efforts that are grounded in the military's core values, uphold high standards, and reflect the diversity of our Nation. The Joint Force must draw from the full range of America's talent to remain competitive. When we engage with trusted institutions, whether schools, professional organizations, or community groups, we send a message that military service is open to all who are qualified and willing to serve.

235. Lieutenant General Caine, why is it important to have a military whose diversity reflects the U.S. population?

Lieutenant General CAINE. In the current operational environment, it is important that the military focus on increasing lethality with high but fair standards to ensure opportunities for the best Americans to serve.

236. Lieutenant General Caine, the Army achieved its recruiting goals in 2024 for the first time in several years "primarily due to an increase in female recruits." Almost 10,000 women signed up for active duty in 2024, "an 18 percent jump from the previous year, while male recruitment increased by just 8 percent." Why is it important to recruit women to the military?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Current policy allows for members to serve in all roles. We set and maintain high standards throughout the Services and members that meet those standards are given the opportunity to serve.

237. Lieutenant General Caine, why is it important for women to have access to combat roles, including for potential long-term promotions, and how does this tie into being able to effectively recruit and retain women in the military?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Current policy allows for women to serve in all roles. We must set and maintain high standards; Any member who meets the standard is afforded the opportunity to serve in combat roles. We must promote Servicemembers based on demonstrated performance and potential to serve with increased levels of responsibility.

238. Lieutenant General Caine, why is the quality of military housing important for the retention of servicemembers?

Lieutenant General CAINE. It is fundamental to Quality of Service (Gate Commission on the All-Volunteer Force) policy. FRSM Cap and the BCA have had impacts over the last decade. The quality of military housing is important for retention because it directly impacts the well-being and satisfaction of servicemembers. Safe, comfortable, and affordable housing improves moral, reduces stress, and allows servicemembers to focus on warfighting duties.

239. Lieutenant General Caine, why is quality access to healthcare for servicemembers and their families important for the retention of servicemembers?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental requirement for maintaining and retaining a strong and ready fighting force. Ensuring quality access to healthcare is an investment in our Servicemembers, signaling the DOD values the service and commitment of Servicemembers and their families.

240. Lieutenant General Caine, while the Army has improved its recruitment efforts, recent data has shown that “[n]early one-quarter of soldiers recruited since 2022 have failed to complete their initial contracts.” How do you plan to address challenges with retention across the military?

Lieutenant General CAINE. Retention rates throughout the military are trending toward a positive increase. If confirmed I will work closely with each of the Services to ensure that we are retaining the most qualified members that want to continue military service, within the needs of each of the Services.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ERIC SCHMITT

GREAT POWER COMPETITION

241. “I guess with the last remaining seconds I have, I’ll just sort of . . . Your view of this great power competition with China, what are some things that we need to get better at? What are some things that we need to do to prepare as we shift and pivot to Asia? What’s the most important thing one, the one thing?”

Lieutenant General CAINE. [Lt Gen Caine responded, “Taking advantage of the time that we have, as I mentioned earlier in my testimony, making sure that we’re moving with the speed, precision, sense of urgency to get the kit that we need. The challenges range from contested logistics to long-range fires to command and control. So, it’s a much deeper conversation, Senator.]

[Chairman Wicker continued, “Will you supplement that on the record then, General? Because it was a very intricate question that was sprung on you with 10 seconds to go.”]

We need to move with speed, precision, and a sense of urgency to get the capabilities necessary to address challenges that range from contested logistics to long-range fires to command and control. If confirmed, I will conduct a thorough review of the military situation and then provide the President and the Secretary of Defense my best military advice on the actions and investments.

[The nomination reference of Lieutenant General John D. Caine, USAF (retired) follows:]

NOMINATION REFERENCE AND REPORT

PN27

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
March 10, 2025.

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

The following named officer for appointment as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and appointment in the United States Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 152 and 601:

To Be General

Lt. Gen. John D. Caine (Retired), 1488

_____, 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 Lieutenant General John D. Caine, USAF (retired), which was transmitted to the Committee at the time the nomination was referred, follows:]

BIOGRAPHY

LIEUTENANT GENERAL JOHN D. CAINE

Lt. Gen. Dan Caine was the Associate Director for Military Affairs. His most recent assignment was as the Director of Special Programs and the Department of Defense Special Access Program Central Office at the Pentagon, Arlington, Virginia, where he served as the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense for all programs protected under special access controls. He has served in a wide range of operational, staff and joint assignments, primarily as an F-16 fighter pilot, weapons officer, member of the White House staff and special operations officer.

Lt. Gen. Caine was commissioned in 1990 through the ROTC program at the Virginia Military Institute, and he has an Master of Arts in Air Warfare from the American Military University. He has completed a range of national security and leadership courses, including Harvard Kennedy School's course for Senior Executives in National and International Security, and the Syracuse University Maxwell School's Program on National Security. As a Command Pilot, he has logged more than 2,800 hours in the F-16, including more than 150 combat hours. From 2009-2016, Lt. Gen. Caine was a part-time member of the National Guard and a serial entrepreneur and investor.

EDUCATION

1990 Bachelor of Arts, Economics, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington

1998 Squadron Officer School, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., by correspondence

1999 Air Force Weapons School Instructor Course, Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.

2001 Air Force Air to Ground Operations School, Nellis, AFB, Nev.

2004 Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala., by correspondence

2005 Master of Arts, Air Warfare, American Military University, Charles Town, W.Va.

2006 White House Fellow, Air Force Fellows Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

2012 North American Aerospace Defense Command/U.S. Northern Command Joint Task Force Commander Training Course, Peterson AFB, Colo.

2012 Senior Leaders Maintenance Course, Washington, D.C.

2017 Joint and Combined Warfighting Course (JPME-2), Norfolk, Va.

2019 Capstone, National Defense University, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C.

2019 Senior Executives for National and International Security, The Harvard Kennedy School, Cambridge, Mass.

2020 Advanced Senior Leader Development Seminar (ASLDS), Arlie Center, Warrenton, Va.

2020 National and International Security Leadership Seminar (NISLS), Alan L. Freed Associates, Alexandria, Va.

2021 National Security Studies Management Course (NSSMC), Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. November 1992–December 1993, Student, EURO-NATO Undergraduate Pilot Training, 80th Flying Training Wing, Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas
2. January 1994–April 1994, F-16 Pilot/Assistant Training Officer/Scheduling Officer, 138th Fighter Squadron, Syracuse Air National Guard Base, N.Y.
3. April 1994–June 1995, F-16 Pilot/Assistant Weapons Officer, 138th FS, Syracuse ANG, N.Y.
4. June 1995–November 1995, F-16 Instructor Pilot/Chief of Scheduling and Training, 138th FS, Syracuse ANG, N.Y.
5. November 1995–April 1998, F-16 Instructor Pilot/Chief of Training, 138th FS, Syracuse ANG, N.Y.
6. April 1998–July 1998, F-16 Instructor Pilot/Chief of Weapons, 138th FS, Syracuse ANG, N.Y.
7. July 1998–January 1999, F-16 Instructor Pilot/Chief of Weapons, 121st FS, Andrews AFB, Md.
8. January 1999–June 1999, Student, F-16 Fighter Weapons School, 57th Fighter Wing, Nellis AFB, Nev.
9. June 1999–November 2001, F-16 Instructor Pilot/Flight Commander/Chief of Weapons and Tactics, 121st FS, Andrews AFB, Md.
10. November 2001–February 2002, F-16 Mission Commander/Chief of Group Weapons and Tactics, 332d Air Expeditionary Group, Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base, Kuwait

EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION

Second Lieutenant October 01, 1990	
First Lieutenant October 01, 1993	
Captain October 10, 1995	
Major December 28, 2000	
Lieutenant Colonel April 08, 2005	
Colonel January 10, 2011	
Brigadier General May 05, 2016	
Major General September 19, 2019	
Lieutenant General November 03, 2021	

11. February 2002–January 2003, Counter SCUD Project Officer, United States Central Command, MacDill AFB, Fla.
12. January 2003–May 2003, F-16 Mission Commander/Flight Commander/Chief of Wing Weapons and Tactics, 410th Air Expeditionary Wing, Location Masked
13. May 2003–January 2005, Chief of Weapons and Current Operations, ANG AFRC Test Center, Tucson ANG, Ariz.
14. January 2005–August 2005, Director of Operations, ANG AFRC Test Center, Tucson ANG, Ariz.
15. August 2005–September 2006, White House Fellow, Special Assistant to the Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.
16. October 2006–January 2008, Policy Director for Counterterrorism and Strategy, White House Homeland Security Council, Executive Office of the President, Washington, D.C.
17. January 2008–July 2008, J3 and Commander, Joint Special Operations Task Force - Air Directorate, Balad, Iraq
18. July 2008–November 2010, F-16 Instructor Pilot/Mission Commander, 121st FS, Andrews AFB, Md. (July 2008–March 2010, Special Tactics Air Liaison Officer, 24th Special Tactics Squadron, Joint Special Operations Command, Pope AFB, N.C.)
19. November 2010–June 2012, Director of Operations (A3)/Deputy Director of Joint Operations (J3), Joint Force Headquarters, District of Columbia ANG, Washington, D.C.
20. June 2012–June 2014, Commander, 113th Maintenance Group, Joint Base Andrews, Md.
21. June 2014–May 2016, Director of Joint Operations and Training (J3), Joint Force Headquarters, District of Columbia ANG, Washington, D.C.
22. May 2016–June 2016, Deputy Commanding General, Air, Joint Force Headquarters, District of Columbia ANG, Washington, D.C.
23. June 2016–May 2018, June 2016–May 2018, Assistant to the Vice Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, Special Operations Command Washington Office, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va. and Assistant Commanding General, Joint Special Operations Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C. (Concurrently)
24. May 2018–September 2019, Deputy Commanding General, U.S. Central Command Special Operations Component and Deputy Commanding General–Special Operations Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (Iraq) (Concurrently)
25. September 2019–September 2021, Director, Special Programs and Director, Special Access Programs Central Office, Va.
26. September 2021–November 2021, Special Assistant to the Chief, National Guard Bureau, Washington, D.C.
27. November 2021–December 2024, Associate Director for Military Affairs, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C.

SUMMARY OF JOINT ASSIGNMENTS

1. February 2002–January 2003, Counter SCUD Project Officer, United States Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. as a major
2. August 2005–September 2006, White House Fellow, Special Assistant to the Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. as a lieutenant colonel
3. October 2006–January 2008, Policy Director for Counterterrorism and Strategy, White House Homeland Security Council, Executive Office of the President, Washington, D.C., as a lieutenant colonel
4. January 2008–July 2008, J3 and Commander, Joint Special Operations Task Force - Air Directorate, Balad, Iraq, as a lieutenant colonel
5. June 2016–May 2018, June 2016–May 2018, Assistant to the Vice Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, Special Operations Command Washington Office, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va. and Assistant Commanding General, Joint Special Operations Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C. (Concurrently), as a brigadier general
6. May 2018–September 2019, Deputy Commanding General, U.S. Central Command Special Operations Component and Deputy Commanding General - Special Operations Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (Iraq) (Concurrently), as a brigadier general

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Rating: command pilot
 Flight hours: 2,800 hours, to include more than 100 combat hours
 Aircraft flown: T-37, T-38 and F-16

MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Distinguished Service Medal
 Defense Superior Service Medal with bronze oak leaf cluster
 Distinguished Flying Cross
 Bronze Star Medal with bronze oak leaf cluster
 Defense Meritorious Service Medal
 Meritorious Service Medal with bronze oak leaf cluster
 Air Medal with bronze oak leaf cluster
 Aerial Achievement Medal
 Air Force Commendation Medal with two bronze oak leaf clusters
 Joint Service Achievement Medal
 Air Force Achievement Medal
 Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with "V" device and four bronze oak leaf clusters
 Combat Readiness Medal
 National Defense Service Medal with bronze campaign star
 Iraq Campaign Medal
 Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal
 Global War on Terrorism Service Medal
 Air Force Expeditionary Service Medal

Air Force Longevity Service Award with three bronze oak leaf clusters
 Armed Forces Reserve Medal with hourglass device
 Air Force Training Ribbon
 Presidential Service Badge

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

1992 Distinguished Graduate, EURO-NATO Undergraduate Pilot Training
 1999 Outstanding Graduate, USAF F-16 Weapons School
 2004 Lieutenant General Claire Chennault Award as the Air Force's Outstanding Aerial Tactician
 Multiple Civilian Pilot Ratings, including Air Transport Pilot

PUBLICATIONS

"The Air Force Book," The Air Force Association, September 11th vignette
 "Concept of Operations for the location, identification and destruction of Scud Missiles," Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2003
 "Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned Report," The White House, March 2006
 "The National Strategy for Homeland Security," The White House, October 2007

(Current as of February 2025)



[The Committee on Armed Services requires certain senior military officers nominated by the President to positions requiring the advice and consent of the Senate to complete a form that details the biographical, financial, and other information of the nominee. The form executed by Lieutenant General John D. Caine, USAF (retired) in connection with his nomination follows:]

119th CONGRESS, 2025 -- 2026
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
ROOM SR-228
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-6050

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

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE NOMINEE: Answer all questions and provide all requested information. If more space is needed, attach an additional sheet of paper to the Questionnaire and cite the part of the Questionnaire and the question number (e.g., A-9, B-4) to which the continuation of your answer applies. Unless otherwise required, an answer of "yes", "no", or "not applicable" is appropriate.

QUESTIONNAIRE, PART A

NOTE: Information furnished in this part of the Questionnaire will be made available in Committee offices for public inspection prior to the hearing, if any, and will be entered in the hearing record, also available to the public.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TO BE MADE PUBLIC

1. **Name (Include any former names you have used):** John Daniel Caine, Dan Caine, Razin, Razin Caine
2. **Position to which nominated:** Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
3. **Date of nomination:** February 21, 2025
4. **Government experience (List any advisory, consultative, honorary, and other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed in the service record extract provided to the Committee by the applicable agency/department/board):**

Commissioner - President's Commission on White House Fellowships, 2016-2020 Inactive
Member - President's VA Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs, 2014-2016, Inactive

5. Business relationships (List all positions currently held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, and of any educational or other institution):

I am the Founder and CEO of The Caine Group, LLC. This LLC remains a valid business however is dormant at this time with no income or revenue since I re-entered active duty in 2017. I continue to pay LLC fees in order to have this LLC active when I do finally retire from the active-duty US Military.

6. Memberships (List all memberships and offices that you currently hold, as well as any memberships and offices you have previously held, in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable, and other organizations):

The Army Navy Club, Washington DC (Active Member)
 – I enjoy no benefits due to my membership
 The White House Fellows Alumni Association (Active Member)
 – I enjoy no benefits due to my membership
 Aircraft Owners and Pilot Association (Active Member)
 – I enjoy no benefits due to my membership
 Experimental Aircraft Association (Active Member)
 – I enjoy no benefits due to my membership
 National Guard Association of the US (Inactive Member)
 – I enjoy no benefits due to my membership
 Air Force Association (Inactive Member)
 – I enjoy no benefits due to my membership
 Frontiers of Flight Advisory Board (Resigned - Inactive)
 – I enjoy no benefits due to my membership
 University of Dallas Aviation Historical Foundation Board (Resigned -Inactive)
 – I enjoy no benefits due to my membership
 The Cavanagh Flight Museum Board (Resigned - Inactive)
 – I enjoy no benefits due to my membership

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

The George Haddaway Award for Lifetime Achievement in Aviation, The Frontiers of Flight Museum, Dallas, TX (2016)

COMMITMENTS IN FURTHERANCE OF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

NOTE: In order to exercise their legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress timely receive testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch. A simple “yes” or “no” response is appropriate.

- 8. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate Committees of Congress?**

I agree, if confirmed, to accommodate requests to appear and testify before this Committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate Committees of Congress

- 9. Do you agree, if confirmed, and when asked before this Committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate Committees of Congress to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the position of the Administration?**

I agree, if confirmed, to accommodate this Committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate Committees of Congress to give my personal views, even if those views differ from the position of the Administration.

- 10. Do you agree, if confirmed, to provide this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so timely?**

I support Department of Defense policy to cooperate fully with Congress in the execution of its oversight function. If confirmed, and consistent with these policies, I will accommodate Committee requests to provide records and other information within their jurisdiction.

- 11. Do you agree, if confirmed, to consult with this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you?**

I support Department of Defense policy to cooperate fully with Congress in the execution of its oversight function. If confirmed, and consistent with these

policies, I will accommodate Committee requests to provide records and other information within their jurisdiction.

- 12. Do you agree, if confirmed, to keep this Committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate Committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided?**

I agree, if confirmed, to keep informed 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 I or my organization previously provided.

- 13. Do you agree, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this Committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request?**

I support Department of Defense policy to cooperate fully with Congress in the execution of its oversight function. If confirmed, and consistent with these policies, I will accommodate Committee requests to provide records and other information within their jurisdiction.

- 14. Do you agree, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this Committee?**

I agree, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of me or my organization from individual Senators who are members of this Committee.

- 15. Do you agree, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress?**

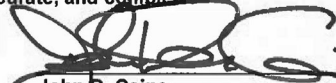
I agree, if confirmed, to ensure that myself and other members of my organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this Committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress.

[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.]

NOTE: The Committee MAY require copies of your Federal income tax returns. You will be advised at a later date as to whether you are required to provide your tax returns. Any tax return you are required to provide will be made available only to Senators and Committee staff designated by the Chairman; they will not be available for public inspection.

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.



**John D. Caine
Lt Gen, USAF (Ret)**

This 7th day of March, 2025

[The nomination of Lieutenant General John D. Caine, USAF (retired) 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 April 11, 2025.]