

Advance Policy Questions for Heather Wilson
Nominee for Secretary of the Air Force

Department of Defense Reforms

The FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act included the most sweeping reforms since the Goldwater Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.

Do you support these reforms?

I am becoming more familiar with the reforms enacted in this legislation and their impact on the Air Force. To the extent I understand their broad outlines, I support them and will more fully evaluate them if confirmed.

What other areas for defense reform do you believe might be appropriate for this Committee to address?

I have no recommendations for further reform at this time.

Duties

What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Secretary of the Air Force?

The Secretary of the Air Force is responsible for all affairs of the Department of the Air Force in accordance with Title 10 of the U.S. Code, subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense. These functions include organizing, supplying, equipping, training, maintaining, and administering the Air Force.

What recommendations, if any, do you have for changes in the duties and functions of the Secretary of the Air Force, as set forth in section 8013 of title 10, United States Code, or in Department of Defense regulations pertaining to functions of the Secretary of the Air Force?

None at this time.

Qualifications

The Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act amended section 8013 of title 10, United States Code, to require that the Secretary of the Air Force “to the greatest extent practicable, be appointed from among persons most highly qualified for the position by reason of background and experience, including persons with appropriate management or leadership experience.”

What background and experience do you have that you believe qualifies you for this position?

I have 35 years of professional experience in a range of leadership and management

roles in the military, government, private industry and higher education.

Since 2013, I have been the President of the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, an engineering and science research university located in the Rushmore Region of South Dakota. As the chief executive reporting to the Board of Regents, I have been responsible for all matters related to the operation, performance, and financial management of the university.

From 1998 through 2009 I was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, where I served on House Armed Services Committee and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. While the Chair of the Subcommittee on Technical and Tactical Intelligence, the Committee conducted a review of the nation's overhead intelligence collection architecture and initiated oversight of the President's Terrorist Surveillance Program, which led to significant revisions to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

Before being elected to the Congress, from 1995 through 1998, I was a Cabinet Secretary in New Mexico's state government where I administered an agency with over 2,000 employees and a \$200 million budget responsible for foster care, adoption, juvenile delinquency, children's mental health, and early childhood education.

From 1989 through 1991 I was the Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control on the National Security Council Staff at the White House responsible for advising the President through the National Security Advisor on matters related to NATO and the negotiation of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

I was an active duty Air Force officer from 1982 through 1989. Following the completion of graduate education, I served at Headquarters Third Air Force at RAF Mildenhall, England where I was responsible for base planning and host country negotiations for the arrival of nuclear capable cruise missiles at RAF Molesworth. I then served at the United States Mission to NATO in Brussels, Belgium in the office of Defense Plans, and briefly in Vienna, Austria at the Conventional Forces in Europe arms control negotiations.

From 1991-1995 and again from 2009-2013 I worked as a senior advisor and consultant to several national laboratories as well as defense and scientific industry on a wide range of programs related to nuclear weapons, non-proliferation, arms control verification, intelligence and the defense industrial base. In 2011-2012 I was also a candidate for the U.S. Senate.

I have served on the boards of two publicly traded corporations – Peabody Energy (NYSE: BTU), and Raven Industries (NASDAQ: RAVN) – as well as numerous advisory and non-profit boards including the CIA advisory board on Biological Warfare, the National Security Agency Research Advisory Board, and the Congressional Panel on the Nuclear Security Enterprise.

I am a distinguished graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and a Rhodes Scholar with Masters and Doctoral degrees in International Relations.

While I was not a military pilot, I am an instrument rated private pilot. I am also the spouse of a retired air national guardsman, giving me a deeper understanding of the guard and the important role of families and family support for our Airmen.

In sum, I am a seasoned and successful senior executive with very broad administrative and national security experience and deep roots in the United States Air Force.

Major Challenges and Priorities

If confirmed, what broad priorities will you establish?

While I have been away from federal service for several years, my initial impression is that we must restore the readiness of the Air Force so that it can defend the vital national interests of the United States. In addition, I will work with Congress to address the constraints imposed by the Budget Control Act so that the Air Force can be cost effectively modernized to meet a range of threats now and in the future. I intend to bring renewed focus to the training and education of Airmen, particularly with respect to the quality of command at the squadron and wing level. Working with my colleagues in the other services and under the guidance of the Secretary of Defense, I will seek to bring business-minded reforms to the Air Force to get high quality capabilities at the best price for the taxpayer. Finally, I expect to review and further develop the Air Force research and development priorities to ensure we are investing in basic and applied research that will keep the Air Force ahead of adversaries for the long term.

In your view, what are the major challenges, if any, you would confront if confirmed as Secretary of the Air Force?

Since the passage of the Budget Control Act in 2011, the number of people in the Air Force has declined significantly while the demand for air and space power has increased. During this period the Air Force made supporting the warfighter a priority. In its 26th year of continuous combat operations, the decline in readiness to fight peer or near-peer adversaries and deferral of modernization is the greatest risk and the biggest challenge we face.

If confirmed, what management actions and time lines would you establish to address these challenges?

While there is no instant fix to the readiness problem, we must immediately start recovering this year. Over the next five years, working with the Congress and the Secretary of Defense, I will seek to steadily increase the size of the Air Force to fill the vacancies we have for today's missions.

There are numerous modernization and procurement projects underway - fighters, bombers, tankers, intelligence platforms, space capabilities, and our nuclear deterrent. In each case, I will ensure we systematically review timelines and costs to get the capabilities we need in a timely way at the best possible price.

Relations with Congress

What are your views on the state of the Air Force's relationship with the Senate Armed Services Committee in particular, and with Congress in general?

Based on pre-confirmation meetings, I believe the relationship is good, but there is also room for improvement. I respect the role of the Congress under our constitutional system of divided power. If confirmed, I will seek to understand concerns and address them directly. I will also be forthright about the challenges we face and transparent in my recommendations to address those challenges.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between the Congress and the Air Force?

If confirmed, I will seek to develop a relationship of mutual respect based on trust and competence. I think it is important to communicate frequently and frankly. I will listen carefully to your ideas for reform and improvement.

A significant number of issues important to Members of Congress happen at the local level and can be handled at the local level, and I will seek to enable meaningful relationships between our Air Force units and your local offices.

The committee has experienced frustration with the timeliness of responses from the Air Force on requests for information, questions and inserts for the record, and reports required by law.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to ensure such requests from the committee are met in a timely manner, with comprehensive responses and detailed information?

I will review recently instituted process changes intended to improve the quality and timeliness of responses. I'll monitor results and direct that adjustments be made accordingly.

Part of the solution to this problem is likely to be improved responsiveness to informal requests for information so that formal reports are not required. In that regard, I will review congressional interaction guidance so that Congress gets accurate information in a timely way.

Torture and enhanced interrogation techniques

Do you support the standards for detainee treatment specified in the revised Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued in September 2006, and in DOD Directive 2310.01E, the Department of Defense Detainee Program, dated August 19, 2014, and required by Section 1045 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 (Public Law 114-92)?

Yes

Air Force Military End Strength

Senior Air Force leaders have stated on many recent occasions that the Air Force is the smallest size in its history, that it cannot get any smaller, and has numerous manpower shortfalls, particularly in the maintenance and fighter pilot career fields. While the Air Force's fiscal year 2017 budget submission did not request an increase in military end strength, the fiscal year 2017 NDAA authorized an increase in Air Force active end strength to 321K. Subsequently, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force made statements that the Air Force's active duty military end strength should be increased to 350K.

In your view, can the Air Force meet national defense objectives at the end strength levels authorized in the fiscal year 2017 NDAA? Could the Air Force meet those objectives at end strength levels in fiscal year 2018 and beyond that would be necessary when a return to 2011 Budget Control Act discretionary spending caps is mandated?

My initial view is that we have a mismatch between our strategic objectives and the military means we have available to confront and deter threats. The Air Force is too small for what the nation expects of it.

Unless the Air Force receives funds above the caps imposed by the Budget Control Act, it will not be able to achieve the readiness, modernization, and force structure required to meet emerging threats.

The 321,000 Airmen authorized in this fiscal year is a step in the right direction to restore the readiness of the force. The Air Force has estimated that 350,000 airmen are required to perform today's missions. I have no reason to question that estimate.

Do you believe the Air Force needs additional force shaping tools requiring legislation beyond those tools that Congress has provided the past few years, to include extending the numerous authorities that expire at the end of fiscal year 2018?

If confirmed, I will fully examine existing authorities in order to determine which force shaping tools are necessary to recruit and retain skilled airmen. I am unaware of additional force shaping tools that are required at this time.

What are your views on the appropriate size and mix of the active duty Air Force, and the reserve components?

In general, our assessment of threats and our national security strategy to meet those threats should drive force structure – including the mix of active, guard, and reserve forces. Particularly in the Air Force, guard and reserve units are highly capable and vital to our national security. I don't have sufficient information to determine the optimal mix of active, guard, and reserve components at this time.

What total force end strength should the Air Force field to support the National Military Strategy?

I understand that the classified national military strategy was updated in late 2016, but I have not yet been briefed on it. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Defense and the Air Force Chief of Staff to guide an evaluation of the force structure needed to support an updated military strategy.

How would you, year over year, increase the Air Force's end strength? How long would it take to build an Air Force of 350K regular Airmen, and what would be the cost?

The Air Force estimates that expansion of 4,000-5000 Airmen a year to an end strength of 350,000 is a sustainable growth rate to recruit and train airmen with the skills and experience levels required. At this time, I have no reason to question that estimate.

Air Force Recruiting and Retention

The recruitment and retention of quality Airmen, officer and enlisted, active duty and reserve, is vital to the Department of the Air Force.

How would you evaluate the effectiveness of the Air Force in successfully recruiting and retaining high caliber personnel during a sustained period of increasing or decreasing end strength?

The Air Force reports that it continues to meet its recruiting targets in both numbers and quality. Retention of highly trained Airmen, particularly in high demand career fields, is a challenge and the Air Force is falling short on retention. This is particularly evident for pilots, but also in other well compensated specialties that are in demand outside the service.

What initiatives would you take, if confirmed, to further improve Air Force recruiting and retention, in both the active and reserve components?

If confirmed, I will review the current recruiting and retention initiatives authorized by Congress and used by the Air Force to evaluate their effectiveness. It is my view that one of the most important things we can do to improve retention of pilots and maintainers is to improve readiness – flying hours, spare parts, aircraft availability etc. Readiness has a direct effect on morale and retention.

What do you believe will be the impact, if any, of the new retirement system effective in fiscal year 2018 on recruiting and retention in the Air Force?

I am unaware of any reliable estimates of impact at this time. If confirmed, I will review available estimates of the impact.

Pilot Retention

Anticipated increases in pilot hiring by commercial airlines are likely to apply pressure on aviator retention for all the services, but most acutely for the Air Force. The

Chief of Staff of the Air Force has recently described this impending pilot shortage as a national problem, and not just limited to the armed forces. The U.S. government is not likely to ever match the salaries of commercial airline companies, especially as shortages grow more acute and compensation increases to attract a shrinking pool of eligible pilots.

If confirmed, what immediate steps would you take to retain the necessary numbers of aviators in the Air Force?

While the bonus authority provided in the National Defense Authorization Act is helpful, we will not be able to compete on a purely monetary basis with commercial aviation over the next decade. Increased readiness levels – particularly flying hours -- will likely have a direct effect on pilot retention. We will almost certainly have to increase pilot production and review other retention initiatives including reduced additional duty requirements, quality of service and quality of life improvements.

Do you agree that aviation incentive pays and bonuses should be tailored to target communities experiencing shortfalls, and not uniformly offered to every pilot at the maximum rate regardless of platform?

Yes

What other long-term initiatives would you use to provide a more lasting solution to aviator retention in the Air Force?

If confirmed, I will evaluate all options and their effectiveness. In addition to monetary incentives, increases in readiness and flying hours will likely have a positive impact on retention and morale.

Given the high cost of training new aviators, do you believe the Air Force is subsidizing the airline industry with a pipeline of ready-trained aviators at a fraction of the cost to the airline? How would you recommend addressing this dynamic?

The demand for commercial pilots is significantly higher than the supply, particularly for pilots with sufficient experience to fly for the airlines. I expect the airline industry to continue to recruit highly qualified pilots to meet their needs from all sources, including from the Air Force. In a free market, when pilots have completed their service obligation for the Air Force, I would not describe this as a subsidy.

There is a national shortage of pilots. While there are a number of private tuition assistance programs to increase the number of commercial pilots, experienced Air Force pilots will continue to be in demand.

The Air Force states their most critical pilot shortages are in the fighter aircraft career fields, where the Air Force is currently 500 fighter pilots short of requirements. The Air Force believes that shortfall could grow to more than 1,000 by the end of the decade. One of the challenges is that the Air Force no longer has a robust inventory of fighter

cockpits sufficient to train all of the newly graduated pilots that would be required to sustain an experienced and combat ready Air Force.

What initiatives would you pursue to address the lack of training opportunities that would mitigate fighter pilot manning shortfalls and help sustain a healthy fighter pilot inventory?

In my discussions with the Air Force, the problem seems to be less of a lack of training opportunities and more of a lack of ability to train due to the small size of the force combined with high operations tempo. With 55 fighter squadrons and a shortfall of approximately 800 fighter pilots, the Air Force is unable to support today's fight and, at the same time, effectively train.

We cannot assume that the demand for fighter squadrons will decline in the near term. We need to increase manpower, ensure sufficient spare parts and trained maintainers, reduce additional duty requirements not related to flying and make as much time available as possible for mission training and readiness.

Readiness

The Air Force Chief of Staff testified in March, 2016, “Readiness remains both an imperative and a struggle for us. Less than half of our combat aircraft are fully prepared for a high tech fight against a capable, well equipped force.”

What is your assessment of the current readiness of the Air Force to meet national security requirements across the full spectrum of military operations?

Senior Air Force leaders have testified that less than 50 percent of the conventional air force is ready for all of the combat missions assigned to them. While the Air Force has put a priority on nuclear deterrent operations and support for counterterrorism, the Air Force is not fully ready to fight against a near-peer competitor.

What is your assessment of Air Force readiness to conduct a mobilization in a national emergency?

I am not familiar with the specific readiness rates of guard and reserve forces. If confirmed, I will be looking more closely at readiness of different units, including the guard and reserve.

What specifically would a fully-funded whole “ready” force look like, and how much time would it take to achieve?

A ready force would have adequate well trained airmen to fight against a range of enemies in air, space and cyberspace. Airmen would have sufficient well-maintained equipment and flying hours in realistic situations to deter or prevail in any fight.

What readiness-related accounts are you currently executing at maximum capacity, and if you were given more funding today, what would be the top near-term

priorities in which you would invest to restore full spectrum readiness as soon as possible?

I have not yet been briefed on the specific accounts and the best path to recovery, but it seems clear that shortages of maintenance manpower and pilots is a very important factor. If confirmed, I will seek to understand more fully the priorities for recovery in order to systematically restore readiness.

The Air Force has difficulty articulating its readiness levels because of the diverse missions it accomplishes, as well as its large proportion of garrison-based capabilities such as space and nuclear missile forces.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to more accurately measure and articulate comprehensive Air Force readiness levels?

If confirmed, I will work with the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the commanders of our Major Commands, and the Headquarters Air Force staff to validate our readiness measures and report them accurately.

Federal Hiring Freeze

Recently, Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work issued implementation guidance on the civilian workforce hiring freeze directed by the President. The guidance authorized exemptions for “positions in shipyards and depots” that “perform direct management of inventory and direct maintenance of equipment.”

For what types of workers and mission functions is hiring still frozen by the President’s order?

I have been told by the Air Force that it is fully complying with the President’s Executive Order and DoD guidance for freezing all civilian vacancies regardless of funding source. The Air Force is applying the authority to exempt specific positions as necessary to meet national security and public safety responsibilities.

If every year you are losing depot workers to retirement and attrition, how are you going to be able to increase readiness if you need more funding and end strength, yet are unable to hire more civilians to work?

If confirmed, I will evaluate the Air Force’s exemption process and determine if depots need additional exemptions within the current authority granted to the Secretary of the Air Force.

Which readiness-related functions are at the most risk because of this hiring freeze?

If confirmed, I will review which readiness-related functions, if any, are at risk.

Acquisition Issues

The National Defense Authorization Acts for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017 made many changes to defense acquisition processes, including reinserting service chief influence and accountability into acquisition processes.

Do you support the acquisition reform provisions in the Fiscal Years 2017 National Defense Authorization Act?

We need to get good ideas from the drawing board to the flight line faster and at lower cost. I am becoming more familiar with the reforms enacted in this legislation – particularly experimentation and prototyping -- and will seek to identify early opportunities to use these new tools. I support the intent of these changes.

What roles do you see for developmental planning, prototyping, and experimentation for fielding of future Air Force capabilities?

Experimentation and prototyping are tools that can help get good ideas into the hands of airmen faster and at lower cost. Experimentation can help shift the culture from risk aversion to one that celebrates and rewards productive failure. A willingness to “fail fast”, harvest lessons and continue to innovate should be celebrated in a technically advanced Air Force.

Do you agree the services should exploit non-developmental or commercial off-the-shelf solutions to meet Air Force requirements? Would this help put capabilities into the hands of Airmen more quickly?

Yes

How can the Department and the Air Force better access and integrate commercial and military technology to remain ahead of its potential adversaries?

Too many companies will not supply the Defense Department or other federal agencies because it is too hard to do business with the government. With private sector research and development exceeding that done in the military, we have to be able to buy capabilities developed in the commercial sector. If confirmed, I will work with the Air Force Acquisition Office to identify more and better ways to buy commercial products and services that are a good value for the Air Force.

What additional acquisition-related reforms do you believe the Committee should consider?

I am not aware of additional reform authorities needed at this time. If confirmed, I will advise the committee of any additional acquisition reforms needed as I identify them.

If confirmed, how will you synchronize your acquisition responsibilities with the Chief of Staff of the Air Force?

While the Secretary focuses on budgets and acquisition, and the Chief has authority for

requirements, in reality, a close working relationship is essential to make decisions that are the best for the warfighter and get the best value we can for the taxpayer.

What is your assessment of the size and capability of the Air Force acquisition workforce?

If confirmed, I will review the size and professional development of the acquisition workforce. While it varies by program, in general, I think we are well served by highly competent, empowered program managers with focused exceptional teams of professionals supporting the program manager.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure that the Department of the Air Force has an acquisition workforce of the size and capability needed to manage acquisition challenges?

If confirmed, I will assess the state of the acquisition workforce and make appropriate adjustments to the organization, operating guidelines and professional development.

Recent press reports cite an email that you sent to a major defense contractor in which you advised the contractor to take the position that “competition is not in the best interest of the government” in an attempt to avoid re-competing an existing contract with the Department of Energy.

What is your view about the value of competition for Department of Defense contracts?

Competition generally improves the quality and price of the things we buy and can drive innovation.

Conducting a contract competition for management of a Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) is expensive and disruptive if there is not a clear benefit to doing so. In this particular case, the cost-plus fee the government paid for managing that lab was significantly less than the fee paid at other DOE labs which had been through re-competition more recently. In my opinion, it was unlikely that the DOE would have saved money or improved lab performance through re-competition of the management of this federal facility at that time. That perspective was the basis for my recommendation.

If confirmed, will you advocate for competition of Air Force contracts?

Yes, if it's in the best interests of the government.

Audit Readiness

The Department of Defense and the Services remain unable to achieve a clean financial statement audit. The Department also remains on the Government Accountability Office's list of high risk agencies and management systems for financial management and weapon system acquisition. Although audit-readiness has been a goal of the Department for

decades, it has repeatedly failed to meet numerous congressionally directed audit-readiness deadlines.

What is your understanding and assessment of the Air Force's efforts to achieve a clean financial statement audit in 2017?

I support the Air Force having auditable financial statements and systems. If confirmed, I will assess the progress towards being audit ready by the end of FY 2017

In your opinion, is the Department of the Air Force on track to achieve these objectives, particularly with regard to data quality, internal controls, and business process re-engineering?

I am not fully informed on the status of the Air Force efforts to comply with the requirement to have auditable financial statements. If confirmed, I will assess these matters.

If not, what impediments may hinder the Air Force's ability to achieve this goal and how would you address them?

If confirmed, I will become more familiar with the progress and work remaining to be done in this area.

What steps will you take, if confirmed, to ensure the Air Force achieves these objectives without an unaffordable or unsustainable level of one-time fixes and manual work-arounds?

The Air Force should have auditable financial statements and Air Force financial systems should be configured in such a way that the finances are able to be audited.

Nuclear Enterprise

What are your views on the necessity of maintaining a nuclear triad?

We must maintain a safe, secure and reliable nuclear deterrent. The deterrent has been effective for over 70 years. The air and ground legs of the triad are a core mission of the Air Force and will continue to be a core mission.

What are your views on the condition of the ground-based leg of the nuclear triad, and the urgency of the need for its recapitalization?

The Minuteman III is aging and it needs to be replaced. It was built in the 1970s, further life extension is no longer feasible and continuing to rely on it for the long term is not cost effective. If confirmed, I will be informed in more detail about the operational and cost of maintenance issues that will influence the timeline for replacing the Minuteman III.

What priority would you give to the following Air Force nuclear modernization

programs within the overall Air Force acquisition budget over the next five to ten years: the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, the Long Range Standoff Weapon, a nuclear-capable variant of the F-35, and modernization of the nuclear command and control infrastructure?

I believe that each of these modernization efforts is an important element in the U.S. nuclear deterrent. The Ground Based Strategic Deterrent and Long Range Standoff Weapon will replace systems that are operating decades beyond their originally intended service lives. The dual capable F-35 aircraft will continue to extend the umbrella of our nuclear deterrent over our allies.

I am not fully informed on the planned upgrades to our nuclear command, control, and communications systems and, if confirmed, will be fully briefed on this effort.

If confirmed, will you affirm that you will give priority attention to continued implementation of the recommendations of the 2014 Nuclear Enterprise Review, especially those recommendations concerning the training, readiness, and morale of service personnel assigned to the nuclear mission?

Yes

F-35 Joint Strike Fighter

The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Program, the largest and most expensive acquisition program in Department of Defense history, was formally initiated as a program of record in 2001, and subsequently adjusted to a total planned buy of 2,443 aircraft for the U.S. The program has not yet completed the System Development and Demonstration (SDD) phase, now projected for an additional seven-month delay and an additional \$500 million in cost overruns. The full rate production decision is not due at least until 2019, 18 years after its inception. At currently projected annual procurement rates, the last delivery of the Air Force's F-35A is now planned for the year 2040.

The Senate Armed Services Committee report accompanying S. 1376, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, required the Secretary of Defense to assess the current requirement for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter total program of record quantity, and then revalidate that quantity or identify a new requirement for the total number of F-35 aircraft the Department would ultimately procure. The Department provided an interim response that stated a reassessment of the total procurement quantity would be provided at a later date.

If confirmed, will you direct a reassessment of the Air Force's F-35A total program procurement quantity, currently established at 1,763 aircraft?

If confirmed, I will fully support the review of the F-35 program as directed by Secretary Mattis so that the Air Force has the capability it needs to protect our vital national interests against threats now and in the future.

President-elect Trump recently stated, "Based on the tremendous cost and cost

overruns of the Lockheed Martin F-35, I have asked Boeing to price out a comparable F-18 Super Hornet!”

In your view, what are the alternatives for the Air Force to purchasing 1,763 F-35A fighter aircraft? Should the Air Force consider restarting the F-22 production line, purchasing advanced fourth generation fighters still in production such as enhanced F-15s and F-16s, or developing a next generation fighter aircraft beyond the F-35A’s capabilities?

I fully support the review of the F-35 fighter program directed by Secretary Mattis.

As we evaluate needs and options, there are some things I will keep in mind.

The last time an American soldier or marine was killed in combat by enemy aircraft was August 15, 1953 – during the Korean War. Public reports indicate that, in the current fight against ISIS, the United States and its coalition partners have used more than 40,000 munitions against the enemy with deadly effect. 90% of these strikes were conducted by the United States Air Force.

While we have dominated the air for the last 26 years of continuous combat operations, we must continue to maintain the advantage in air and space power against emerging threats. Our potential adversaries are not standing still and there is cause for concern.

While current aircraft like the F-16, and F-15 can be effective in lower threat environments, against well defended targets and the newer aircraft being developed and deployed by our adversaries, they are likely not good enough.

As part of the review directed by Secretary Mattis, I would expect the Air Force to evaluate the cost of re-starting the F-22 production line and the effectiveness of the F-22 against emerging threats.

We need to have an Air Force with a range of capabilities that can win every fight. That will require modern, stealthy aircraft that can penetrate defended airspace, and see and kill the target before the enemy even knows what is happening.

Going forward, in procurement of major systems, time is money. We have to keep the time from conception to operational capability short. If we don’t, technology of subsystems changes and design discipline erodes, which results in increased cost.

B-21 Long Range Strike Bomber

On October 27, 2015, the Air Force announced the award of the engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) contract for the new B-21 bomber. The fiscal year 2017 NDAA directed enhanced reporting of B-21 program cost, schedule, and performance data to the Government Accountability Office for more frequent assessments and focused oversight.

If confirmed as Secretary of the Air Force, what will be your role in the

management of the B-21 bomber program to insure cost, schedule, and performance remain on track?

The Chief of Staff and I will work together so that the requirements remain stable, achievable and affordable and the B-21 is delivered on time, and on budget.

The Air Force publicly released the adjusted average procurement unit cost (APUC) of \$511 million in fiscal year 2010 constant dollars, and \$3.5 billion FYDP funding reduction, both of which were adjusted downward due to the independent cost estimate based on the winning bid.

In your view, why would it be necessary for the Air Force to keep the total value of the B-21 EMD program contract award classified, despite the fact that the Air Force budget has included an unclassified request for the EMD phase each year since fiscal year 2012 and each fiscal year's actual expenditures are publicly available?

As a nominee, I have not received classified briefings on the B-21. I am aware that there are ongoing conversations between the Air Force and members of the committee and members of the committee staff on this issue.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the committee is kept informed about classified programs and their costs so that the committee can perform its oversight role.

What actions shall you take if confirmed to ensure that the provisions of section 211 of the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2013 are met?

The B-21 has been designed from the outset to be a nuclear capable bomber. Nuclear capability is not a modification or "add-on" feature. My role will be to ensure that the B-21 is capable of carrying strategic nuclear weapons when it achieves initial operating capability and that it will be certified to use nuclear weapons not less than two years later.

I have been informed at the unclassified level that nuclear certification requirements have been confirmed at the program's latest design review.

Presidential Aircraft Replacement (PAR)

The Air Force's total cost estimate for PAR program development is \$4.3 billion in "then-year" dollars. After President-elect Trump stated, "costs are out of control, more than \$4 billion," the Boeing CEO stated his company will, "get it done for less than that... We're going to make sure that he gets the best capability and that it's done affordably."

If confirmed, how will you ensure the Air Force will keep the development costs "less than that," especially as the Air Force plans to sign a development contract with a cost-plus reimbursement structure?

In January, Secretary Mattis directed the Deputy Secretary of Defense to guide a review of the requirements for the aircraft in coordination with the White House Military Office in order to reduce program costs.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure the Air Force meets the Administration's intent to provide the best taxpayer value while meeting executive airlift needs for the Office of the President.

EC-130H Compass Call Recapitalization Program

The Air Force has plans to buy 10 business jet aircraft to replace the capabilities provided by the current EC-130H Compass Call aircraft. These plans include using some form of rapid acquisition procedures that would lead to selecting a particular airframe very quickly. This approach causes some concern because selecting an aircraft for this program could give the selected aircraft contractor a particular edge winning later competitions for modernization programs for other Air Force capabilities, such as programs to modernize the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS), signals intelligence aircraft and airborne warning and control aircraft.

How would you suggest the Air Force ensure that subsequent competitions are not unduly influenced by a near-term rapid acquisition?

It is my understanding that one contractor filed a bid protest regarding the Compass Call program in February and that it is currently under review.

While I have not been briefed on the bids or the protest, it is my understanding that the Compass Call aircraft replacement program is quite different from the modernization of JSTARS.

In the case of Compass Call, the Air Force needs a contractor to move the current equipment into a new airframe. It's a mechanical design and wiring job.

Modernization of JSTARS will be much more complex, involving the development of an improved JSTARS system. This is a very different challenge requiring different capabilities from the contractor.

Based on this understanding, it is my view that the Air Force should approach each competition independently to get the right contractor for each job, with the appropriate capabilities, in order to get the best value for the taxpayer.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Air Force reviews the results of the bid protest and acts accordingly.

If the Air Force cannot provide such assurances now, should the Air Force hold a broader competition now for aircraft that would reach beyond the more narrowly defined Compass Call modernization program?

I understand that one contractor has challenged the bid process and I have not been

briefed on the proposals or the challenge. That said, based on my understanding of the difference in these projects set out above, my view is that the Air Force shouldn't increase the cost and delay the new airframe for Compass Call to benefit higher capability contractors who are likely very competitive for JSTARS.

The Air Force needs a robust industrial base and I see no advantage to the Air Force mission or the taxpayer from blending these two very different procurements.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Air Force takes into account the results of the bid challenge and proceeds accordingly.

Replacement of the E-4B National Airborne Operations Center (NAOC)

The E-4B will be reaching end of life in the late 2020's. This is a unique asset for performing the full range of the Secretary of Defense's Title 10 responsibilities, including nuclear command, control and communications. There is concern that a possible split of the missions of the NAOC amongst separate future aircraft could cause a loss of functionality and interplay between the E-4B's current mission sets.

What are your views on the E-4B replacement program, and will you ensure that any replacement program ensures that the Air Force will retain the ability to perform the full E-4B mission set?

I understand that the Air Force is conducting an analysis of alternatives for the replacement of the National Airborne Operations Center. The analysis is due in FY18. If confirmed, I will keep the committee informed on the results of this review.

Munitions

Air Force munitions inventories, particularly those of precision guided munitions, have declined significantly due to high operational usage, insufficient procurement, and a requirements system that does not adequately account for the ongoing need to transfer munitions to our allies and operations short of major combat, such as in the current operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria.

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

Over the past two and a half years, the Air Force has reportedly used over 40,000 munitions in operations against ISIS. Congress has supported the Air Force by authorizing Overseas Contingency Operation funds to replenish these munitions.

It is my understanding that the Air Force is using these funds to buy munitions and industry has reached the limit for current industrial capacity for some munitions. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Air Force continues to explore opportunities to increase munitions manufacturing capacity.

This may also be an area where the three military services need to work more closely

together and with industry to improve advanced manufacturing capability so that industry can respond to the needs of the service.

How will the Air Force adapt to self-imposed Department of Defense restrictions on area attack and denial munitions in accordance with the Ottawa Agreements?

With respect to area denial munitions, the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines (APL) bans the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, and retention of all anti-personnel landmines. The US is not a signatory to the Ottawa Convention. However, there is a Presidential Policy Directive that restricts use of anti-personnel landmines. If confirmed, I will ensure the Air Force continues to work closely with the Army on alternatives to anti-personnel landmines.

With respect to area attack munitions, I am aware that Department of Defense (DoD) policy restricts the use and sale of cluster munitions after 2018 that have a greater than one percent chance of leaving unexploded ordnance behind on the battlefield. It is my understanding that the Air Force currently has approximately 2,000 area attack and denial munitions that meet the DoD policy and will continue to be available for warfighter use after the January 2019 deadline. In addition to these munitions, it is my understanding that the Air Force is developing alternative munitions that will meet both the warfighter area attack requirements and the DoD cluster munitions policy.

Space

The Secretary of the Air Force was assigned new oversight responsibilities for space programs in the Department of Defense when the position was designated as the principal DoD space adviser (PDSA).

If confirmed, would you propose any changes to National Security space policy and programs?

I look forward to my responsibilities as principal DOD space advisor and chairing the Defense Space Council. The Air Force is responsible for over 90% of the Defense Department's space assets on orbit and the nation is heavily dependent on space capabilities for navigation, communication, command and control, intelligence, and precision targeting.

I will seek to lead Department efforts to deepen our understanding of the growing threat to our space assets, refine our strategy for space control, and organize and equip the Air Force to meet the threat. In addressing these issues, I will work closely with the other services and federal agencies to align efforts where needed.

There is growing concern about the vulnerability of our nation's space-based systems and its supporting architecture.

Do you agree, and, if so, what would be your priorities for addressing these vulnerabilities?

Yes

As mentioned above, I will seek to lead Department efforts to deepen our understanding of the growing threat to our space assets, refine our strategy for space control, and organize and equip the Air Force to meet the threat. In addressing these issues, I will work closely with the other services and federal agencies to align efforts where needed.

What do you perceive as the threats to our national security space satellites?

Space is no longer a sanctuary. In any conflict, it will be a contested environment. I was serving on the House Intelligence Committee when China successfully tested an anti-satellite missile nearly a decade ago. While I have not been briefed on classified matters for several years, it is my understanding that the threat to space assets has continued to advance.

Do you support the development of offensive space control capabilities to counter those threats?

Yes. We need to think of air, near-space and space as a continuum that the United States must protect through all phases of potential conflict.

According to a recent study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), fragmented leadership has undermined the Department's ability to deliver space capabilities to the warfighter on time and on budget. One repeated cause for concern has been fractured decision-making and many layers of bureaucracy.

Do you believe the existing space acquisition structure is sufficient? If not, what changes do you believe are appropriate?

If confirmed, I will review the acquisition structure for space to ensure the warfighter is getting the capabilities we need at a reasonable price.

Do you support more competition in the launch of Department of Defense payloads?

I believe competition can result in cost savings for the government. At the same time, commercial launch providers may not be able to meet launch requirements for national security space payloads as those requirements are currently crafted.

I also believe that it is very difficult for commercial launch providers to supply government customers at competitive prices because of the constraints imposed by federal acquisition rules. If those rules are the best way to serve the Air Force and the taxpayer well over the long term, their use is justifiable. But if our processes and regulations are impeding the accomplishment of the mission, we should review our processes and improve them.

The Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act prohibits the use of Russian rocket engines after December 31, 2022. Are you committed to ending U.S. dependence on the use of Russian rocket engines as soon as possible, perhaps even

before December 31, 2022?

If confirmed, I will continue the Air Force's commitment to ending U.S. dependence on the Russian RD-180 engine. The Air Force is currently working with industry to develop launch capability and transition from the RD-180. I understand that the Air Force estimates it will take until 2022 to have new launch capability available. I understand that the FY17 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the Air Force to buy 18 more RD-180 engines through December 31, 2022 for launches through 2024. If the transition can be done faster than 2022, I would support an earlier transition.

Cyber and Electronic Warfare

Cyber is an issue that cuts across many departments and agencies of the Federal government, from the intelligence community to the Department of Defense, the FBI, Homeland Security, the State Department, the Justice Department, and so on. This fact, and the complexities associated with the cyber domain, severely challenges the ability of diverse agencies to integrate and collaborate effectively.

Do you believe the Air Force is organized and postured appropriately to address the full spectrum of cyber threats to Air Force air, space, and cyberspace operations?

While the Air Force is currently providing cyber forces to Combatant and Joint Commanders, I don't think any element of government or the private sector is prepared for the full spectrum of cyber threats.

Do you have recommendations for improving inter-service and inter-agency orchestration of offensive and defense cyber capabilities?

While the strongest national capability for both cyber offense and cyber defense is in the National Security Agency, each of the services also have cyber forces. There likely needs to be a focus in all three services on developing common understanding of cyber operational capabilities, training and deployment processes as well as developing specific areas of focus and expertise.

As the Department prepares to release its new electronic warfare (EW) strategy, and considering the Air Force has relied upon Navy and Marine Corps EW capabilities since retiring the EF-111 Raven aircraft in 1998:

How do you envision the future of Air Force electronic warfare capabilities?

It is my understanding that the Air Force provides the Defense Department's electronic warfare capability against command and control systems with EC-130H COMPASS CALL aircraft. The Navy and Marine Corps provide the majority of the Defense Department's electronic warfare capacity against radar with the EA-6B and EA-18G.

Specialization by agreement among the services in the kind of electronic warfare capabilities provided to combatant commanders makes sense to me for assets that are important, but small in numbers.

Because of the difficulty in determining and defining the point where cyber operations and electronic warfare operations merge, how would you organize, train, and equip the Air Force to minimize gaps and seams with regard to threat assessment, requirements determination, material solutions, and concept of operations development for these two critical mission areas?

The Air Force has collocated the divisions responsible for cyber operations, cyber requirements, and electronic warfare in the Pentagon to allow for collaboration on requirements and programs.

While both electronic warfare and cyber operations can have similar effects -- disabling an enemy's systems rather than physically destroying them -- the method, equipment and concept of operations is quite different.

Ultimately, a combatant commander must have an integrated system of command and control in order to accomplish military objectives by a variety of means.

Air Force Information Technology Programs

The Air Force's Air Operations Center 10.2 system upgrade program recently experienced a Critical Change (Major Automated Information System equivalent to a Nunn-McCurdy critical program breach) that resulted in development costs doubling and a three-year delay.

What major improvements would you like to see made in the Air Force's development and deployment of major information technology systems?

If confirmed, I will become more familiar with this particular program.

As a general principle, information technology is likely an area where it makes sense to take advantage of commercially available systems, or allow greater flexibility to buy new capabilities rapidly when it can be done securely or with reasonably low risk.

How will you encourage process and cultural change in organizations so that they maximize the benefits that new enterprise information technology systems can offer in terms of cost savings and efficiency?

The potential cost savings from enterprise information technology systems and how the Air Force has organized its IT systems is an area where I will have to learn more, if confirmed.

From my experience in higher education and child welfare, improvements in information technology enterprise systems usually take longer and cost more than estimated – particularly when transitioning data and tools from legacy systems.

Though new enterprise IT systems may enable performance improvements, they don't always improve efficiency or save money.

What is the relationship between Air Force efforts at implementing enterprise information technology programs and supporting computing services and infrastructure to support Air Force missions, and efforts being undertaken by the Defense Information Systems Agency?

If confirmed, I will need to learn more about how the Air Force is modernizing its information technology systems, and how it can improve performance and reduce cost by aligning with or relying upon the Defense Information Systems Agency.

How will you ensure that appropriate business process reengineering is undertaken and accomplished before initiating new business systems, IT program development, and deployment?

While business process reengineering is required by statute before initiating a new business system acquisition, it is also just good management practice to continually review processes to streamline and eliminate unneeded steps at all levels of the organization.

While the motivation to reduce unnecessary costs that drives the private sector to continuously improve processes does not exist in government, the frustration of inefficient processes contributes to dissatisfaction among high performing Airmen and wastes taxpayer money.

If confirmed, process reengineering will be required before any business system acquisition. More importantly, if confirmed, I would seek to reinforce that process improvement teams and other quality management tools are the standard way the Air Force should operate in general, and not just when buying information technology.

What role will the Air Force's research and testing enterprise play in the development and deployment of Air Force business IT systems?

With a much larger commercial market, business IT systems an area where the Air Force can benefit from private sector development and will more than likely focus on purchasing commercial products rather than research and development of unique systems.

If confirmed, I would anticipate that the Air Force will continue to advance science and technology in intelligent and autonomous systems, complex data visualization, human/machine interface, computer science, and cybersecurity.

Air Force-related Defense Industrial Base

What is your assessment of the systems and processes for identifying, evaluating, and managing risk in the Air Force's organic and commercial defense industrial base, including the munitions industrial base?

If confirmed, I will examine these systems and processes. I understand that Air Force policy requires acquisition leaders to assess the industrial base throughout each program's lifecycle, and there are defense department efforts to evaluate and ensure access to a robust defense industrial base. I am nonetheless generally concerned that the difficulty of doing business with the government discourages medium and small businesses and innovative technically oriented businesses from viewing the defense department as a desirable customer. In a reversal from the immediate post-World War II era, there is by far more research and development done in the commercial sector than done by the defense department. We must ensure that the Air Force can benefit from private sector innovation.

How should Air Force acquisition leaders consider impacts on the industrial base when addressing requirements for recapitalization or modernization of major defense weapons systems and munitions?

If confirmed, I will seek to ensure that the Air Force takes industrial base impact into consideration when planning major procurement and long term support of weapons systems and munitions. When possible, maintaining multiple sources of supply for components and leveraging commercially capability and capacity benefits the Air Force.

If confirmed, what changes, if any, would you pursue in systems and processes to improve identification, monitoring, assessment, and timely actions to ensure that risk in the Air Force-relevant sectors of the defense industrial base is adequately managed to develop, produce, and sustain technically superior, reliable, and affordable weapons systems and munitions?

At this time, I do not have any changes in mind. If confirmed, I will keep the committee informed if I identify changes that need to be made.

Air Force Science and Technology

What is your understanding and assessment of the role that Air Force science and technology programs have played and will play in developing capabilities for current and future Air Force systems?

The Air Force science and technology program advances capabilities in all mission areas. More than at any time in our history, rapid innovation moved quickly to the battlefield will determine who will prevail in conflict. The Air Force must continue to invest in path-breaking research and development and get new capabilities from the lab bench to the flight line faster than our adversaries.

How will you ensure that promising Air Force science and technology programs will successfully transition to operational warfighting capabilities?

We need to tighten the connection between intelligence, operations, research and acquisition. I strongly support rapid prototyping and experimentation on tight time cycles for new capabilities, and using rapid acquisition authorities to provide needed capability to the warfighter.

If confirmed, what metrics would you use to judge the value and the investment level in Air Force science and technology programs?

Metrics for research and development are inherently difficult and often are not related to operational success. Common metrics used in higher education and commercial industry like patents awarded, license agreements signed, percent of sales from new products and royalty revenue are not really relevant to Air Force research. Moreover, the federal government has more latitude to support basic research with long term potential than the private sector, which often operates in a maximum 3-5 year time horizon.

I am unaware of what metrics the Air Force currently uses to evaluate the value of science and technology programs, or how the Air Force prioritizes research areas.

I would expect metrics like number of people involved in research, percent of the budget spent on research, numbers of PhD students or research scientists engaged in Air Force sponsored projects, numbers of active projects, numbers of Small Business Innovative Research grants, numbers of active research partnerships and average project duration are likely monitored and measured by the Air Force research enterprise.

Given that even the best metrics are of questionable value in research enterprises, it is probably more important to seek to develop and protect a sub-culture in Air Force research and development that cultivates and rewards highly creative innovators, encourages interdisciplinary partnerships, and rewards fast-paced productive failure.

Religious Guidelines

In your view, do Department of Defense policies concerning religious accommodation in the military appropriately accommodate the free exercise of religion and other beliefs, including individual expressions of belief, without impinging on those who have different beliefs, including no religious belief?

Air Force commanders have a responsibility to ensure that the spiritual needs of all Airmen are met. This responsibility, unique to the military, is carried out through the Chaplain Corps. Commanders must avoid the official endorsement of any particular religion, while also being able to freely exercise their own religious beliefs. Air Force policy must continue to ensure that all Airmen are able to choose to practice their particular religion or subscribe to no religious belief at all.

Do you agree that the primary role of the military chaplaincy is to provide for the free exercise of religion by all service members and that military chaplains are sufficiently trained to perform or provide for this constitutional right in today's pluralistic military community? If not, why not?

The Air Force Chaplain Corps provides spiritual care and ensures that the spiritual needs of all Airmen and their families are met. A chaplain advises Air Force leaders on matters related to religious, spiritual, ethical, moral and morale concerns and advocates for the religious and spiritual needs of Airmen and their families.

The Chaplain is a valuable member of the military unit as airmen deal with not only the joys and pains of life that all of us know, but with the unique spiritual questions and pressures combatants face. In my experience on active duty and as the wife of a guardsman, military chaplains at the unit level carry out these responsibilities well.

Do you believe it is the role of military chaplains to provide for the religious and spiritual well-being of all members of the armed forces, regardless of their faith beliefs?

Air Force Chaplains “provide and provide for” the spiritual needs of Airmen and their families. If the chaplain cannot personally “provide” for the need of the Airmen and their family due to tenets of their faith, they seek to “provide for” the need of the Airmen and the family.

Chaplains provide religious worship and rites, pastoral care, counseling and spiritual care for Airmen. Chaplains will not perform duties incompatible with their faith and noncombatant status.

Do you believe that current policies provide sufficient guidance to military chaplains who conduct non-religious command training where attendance is required or encouraged to allow chaplains to discuss their religious faith anecdotally and respectfully in a pluralistic setting to support the training objectives?

I am not familiar with the specific details of current guidance to military chaplains. It is my understanding that Air Force guidance makes clear that chaplains adhere to the tenets of their faith and they are not required to participate in religious activities, including public prayer, which are inconsistent with their faith tradition.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

What is your assessment of the Air Force’s sexual assault prevention and response program?

I served on the House Armed Services Committee in 2003 when the Air Force Academy sexual assault scandal led to intense Congressional scrutiny. The Fowler Commission, which investigated the Air Force Academy scandal, concluded that a systematic failure in Air Force leadership helped foster a breakdown in values which led to the pervasiveness of sexual assaults.

In the almost 15 years since that scandal, I think the Air Force has made significant progress in three areas.

First, the systems in place to support and respond to victims are better and are more widely known. The procedure that allows Airmen to initially get care without having to commit to participating in a criminal investigation as a victim is widely understood and used. The Air Force is consolidating violence response, recovery and care under the Air

Force Surgeon General to provide Airmen and commanders comprehensive clinical and non-clinical response support, especially during a crisis.

Second, the education and training of Airmen about sexual assault prevention is standard practice and widely deployed.

Third, Commander accountability for command climate, as well as responsibility for the thorough and impartial investigation of and response to allegations of assault have been reinforced.

While it is difficult to assess, the increase in sexual assault reporting in the Air Force over the past few years is, I think, a positive sign of increased trust in the system that did not exist with respect to the Academy and Air Force leadership in 2003.

What additional steps would you take, if confirmed, to address the problem of sexual assaults in the Air Force?

If confirmed, my objective will be to reduce the incidence of sexual assault in the Air Force, to ensure victims are cared for, to ensure allegations are investigated properly, to ensure perpetrators of sexual assault are appropriately punished, and to ensure that retaliation against victims who report is not tolerated.

I am aware that the Air Force is seeking to get beyond “awareness” to implement prevention strategies that have proven results, like bystander intervention training. Programs like bystander training and focusing on leadership excellence at the squadron level is intended to address the culture and climate issues, rather than just the manifestation of harassment, assault or retaliation.

As a university president responsible for implementing the requirements of Title IX on my campus, I am familiar with bystander education and think that this may help reduce the incidence of sexual assault in the Air Force by influencing the peer culture in Air Force units. As part of this effort, I am aware that the Air Force is in the process of hiring a prevention specialist at the installation level who will be responsible for implementing sexual assault and violence prevention activities that have proven to be effective. If confirmed, I would support this initiative.

What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources the Air Force has in place to prevent sexual assaults and to investigate and respond to allegations of sexual assault?

My understanding of awareness and prevention training is addressed in the previous answer.

The Air Force has Special Victims Investigation and Prosecution teams which are formed to respond to sexual assault cases. These units receive comprehensive training to investigate and respond to allegations of sexual assault.

What is your understanding of the adequacy of Air Force resources and programs to provide victims of sexual assault the medical, psychological, and legal help they need?

The Air Force has a Special Victims' Counsel Program to provide legal representation to victims of sexual assault.

The Air Force also has a Special Victim Investigation and Prosecution capability to ensure that investigations comply with best practices and victims get needed support. The Special Victim Investigation and Prosecution capability is made up of specially trained Air Force Office of Special Investigation agents, judge advocates (including trial counsel), paralegals, and victim liaisons. Air Force personnel in these positions are specially trained and qualified individuals assigned on a case-by-case basis.

Once an investigation is initiated, a Victim Witness Assistance Program liaison is assigned to help the victim to navigate the military justice system, provide the victim case information, help the victim use military and civilian community resources, and facilitate access to legal assistance.

Medical and psychological help for victims is consolidated under the office of the Surgeon General.

What is your assessment of the Department of the Air Force special victim's counsel program?

It is my understanding that the Air Force began the Special Victims' Counsel program in 2013 and that this program has helped to build trust in the military justice process. It gives victims more meaningful input on the disposition and resolution of their cases.

Since 2013, over 2,800 clients, of which 83 have been children, have been represented by special victim's counsel. According to anonymous survey results provided to clients at the end of the case, 99% of respondents would recommend a special victim's counsel to others who have reported a sexual assault and 99% were satisfied with their representation.

What is your assessment of the potential impact, if any, of proposals to remove the disposition authority from military commanders over violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including sexual assaults?

The foundation of military discipline is the commander's authority to set standards, to require Airmen to meet those standards, and to hold Airmen appropriately accountable when they fail to meet standards. The military justice system is the commander's ultimate tool to ensure a disciplined force. Removing commanders' disposition authority undermines the effectiveness of the military justice system.

Commanders do not and cannot make their decisions in a legal vacuum. Instead, every commander is informed and advised by his or her staff judge advocate throughout the life of a case, from report and investigation through disposition and adjudication. The

military justice system depends on both a judge advocate who advises a commander and the commander who then decides what happens with a case. This system best ensures fairness, justice, and discipline and keeps the commander responsible and accountable for the climate, training, prevention and response to infractions in the unit.

Our primary objective should be to reduce the incidence of sexual assault. Command responsibility is vital to the success of that effort.

What is your assessment of the Air Force's protections against retaliation or reprisal for reporting sexual assault?

All reports of sexual assault as well as all reports of retaliation or reprisal for reporting sexual assault or any crime must be investigated. Substantiated allegations must be referred for appropriate command action.

Recognizing the issues and the importance of the issues surrounding retaliation, the Air Force has already taken significant steps to prevent and respond to retaliation, especially related to reports of sexual assault.

Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Victim Advocates and Special Victims' Counsel are able to identify victims' concerns about retaliation and address them early and effectively through the installation Case Management Group -- the support system led by commanders.

Complaints about retaliation can also be made to and handled by command, AF Office of Special Investigations, the staff judge advocate, the inspector general, or the Equal Opportunity office.

Child Abuse in Military Families

Recent press reports indicate that the number of incidents of child abuse in military families has increased.

What is your understanding of the extent of this issue in the Air Force, and if confirmed, what actions will you take to address it?

I have been informed that the rate of child maltreatment in the Air Force has remained stable at a low rate for over a decade.

The Air Force Family Advocacy Program provides clinical services, safety planning, risk management, prevention services and advocacy to military families. Early identification and reporting to the Family Advocacy Program is the key to keeping children and families safe.

As a former foster and adoptive parent and the former Cabinet Secretary for the child welfare system in New Mexico, the issues surrounding child abuse and neglect and responses to it are familiar to me. If confirmed, I will continue to assess the effectiveness of these programs.

Military Health Care

Section 702 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 transferred oversight and management of military hospitals and clinics from the military services to the Defense Health Agency (DHA).

How would you ensure a rapid and efficient transfer of the operations of Air Force medical facilities to the DHA?

I understand that planning for the transition is underway and that the Air Force is committed to supporting a timely transfer of operations as required by the law. If confirmed, I will ensure an efficient transfer of oversight and management of hospital and clinic operations.

If confirmed, how would you ensure that the Air Force reduces its medical headquarters staffs and infrastructure to reflect the changing scope and size of its mission?

If confirmed, I will become more familiar with this transition. It is my understanding that the Air Force and the other services are planning the transition to Defense Health Agency management of hospitals and clinics. If confirmed, I will rely on the Surgeon General to ensure there is a fully developed plan that identifies the specific functions and assets to be transferred to the Defense Health Agency or eliminated as redundant. The Air Force Surgeon General will be assigned appropriate staff at the headquarters level to perform remaining responsibilities.

What is your assessment of the quality of health care and access to health care provided to Air Force military personnel and their families?

It is my understanding that satisfaction with quality of health care delivered at Air Force military treatment facilities has consistently scored over 95% with the military health system goal being 90%. Satisfaction with inpatient care has consistently been between the 75th and 90th percentile.

I also understand that the Air Force is in its second year of a "Trusted Care" initiative that applies the same principles used in aviation safety to the goal of eliminating instances of harm to patients. It is my understanding that there is a significant reduction of "harm events" with strong performance against national healthcare benchmarks.

Finally, to improve healthcare access, the Air Force has implemented policies to increase the number of same day appointments while streamlining or eliminating specialty care referrals.

If confirmed, how would you work with the Air Force Surgeon General to improve the healthcare experience for Air Force military personnel and their families?

If confirmed, I will rely on the Air Force Surgeon General to continue to operate an exceptional healthcare system using best practices for safety, quality, and access.

More than one million patients entrust the Air Force with their healthcare. Through continuous process improvements and development of performance management metrics, the Air Force Medical Service continues to meet or exceed most of the Military Health System benchmarks for patient satisfaction and outcomes.

I will continue to support this system.

Suicide Prevention

What is your assessment of the Air Force's suicide prevention program?

Suicide is a terrible tragedy for the individual and for so many others whose lives are forever changed -- family, friends, and colleagues. It is also a loss for the Air Force. Too often, it leaves people wondering what they could have done, or how they failed to see the pain of someone close.

While the Air Force is committed to suicide prevention, and has a number of initiatives underway to address it, I am unfamiliar with the effectiveness or deployment of these efforts. If confirmed, I will be fully briefed on these programs to evaluate what else should be done.

Sadly, as a university president, the challenges of depression and other mental health issues and suicide prevention are not unfamiliar to me. Suicide among the under 25 age group is a major issue in society at large.

If confirmed, what role would you play in shaping suicide prevention programs and policies for the Department of the Air Force to prevent suicides and increase the resiliency of Airmen and their families?

If confirmed, I would support the continued development and support of effective suicide prevention strategies by the command leadership and the Surgeon General.

Senior Military and Civilian Accountability

While representative of a small number of individuals in DOD, reports of abuses of rank and authority by senior military and civilian leaders and failures to perform up to accepted standards are frequently received. Whistleblowers and victims of such abuses often report that they felt that no one would pay attention to or believe their complaints. Accusations of unduly lenient treatment of senior officers and senior officials against whom accusations have been substantiated are also frequently heard.

What are your views regarding the appropriate standard of accountability for senior civilian and military leaders of the Department?

I expect senior leaders to lead by example and uphold the high standards of behavior we expect of every Airmen. Allegations of inappropriate behavior by senior leaders will be taken seriously, investigated fairly and dealt with appropriately.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure that senior leaders of the Air

Force are held accountable for their actions and performance?

If confirmed, I will continue to ensure that allegations are investigated and that substantiated allegations are referred for appropriate command action.

Base Closure and Realignments

The Department of Defense has repeatedly requested a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round.

Do you believe another BRAC round is necessary? If so, why?

I understand the Air Force believes it has significant excess infrastructure. I have not yet reached the same conclusion based on the information I have seen. If confirmed, I will review the supporting analysis carefully.

If you are confirmed, and if Congress were to authorize another BRAC round, how would you set priorities for infrastructure reduction and consolidation within the Department of the Air Force?

If confirmed, and Congress were to authorize a DoD BRAC round, I would direct the department to evaluate the operational needs of the Air Force to accomplish the missions that the nation expects of us. I believe threat drives strategy, strategy drives force structure and force structure drives infrastructure needs. I would also direct an assessment of projected needs taking into account new and emerging technologies including increasing numbers of remotely piloted vehicles, high performance fighters, joint operations training, and new weapons systems on the distant horizon that may require different training and basing options than we have today.

What is your understanding of the responsibilities of the Air Force in working with local communities with respect to property disposal if Congress were to authorize another BRAC round?

In the wake of previous closures, the Air Force worked with local communities so that base closure could result in redevelopments into trade ports, industrial, recreational, and residential areas. This effort to redevelop was successful in some communities and less successful in others. The Air Force must also address any environmental cleanup responsibilities associated with base closure.

It has been noted repeatedly that the 2005 BRAC round resulted in major and unanticipated implementation costs and saved far less money than originally estimated.

What is your understanding of why such cost growth and lower realized savings occurred?

I was skeptical of cost saving estimates while serving in the House of Representatives before the 2005 BRAC round. At that time, the Defense Department could not provide a clear explanation of the basis for their cost estimates or a clear accounting of what

savings had been realized from the previous round of BRAC.

How do you believe such issues could be addressed in a future BRAC round?

If confirmed, I will seek to improve the quality of analysis done on this issue so that the Defense Department and the Congress can make good decisions informed by rigorous analysis and validated data. In that way, we can make better decisions to support the mission at the lowest cost for the taxpayer.

Operational Energy

In his responses to the advance policy questions from this committee, Secretary Mattis talked about his time in Iraq, and how he called upon the Department to “unleash us from the tether of fuel.” He stated that “units would be faced with unacceptable limitations because of their dependence on fuel” and resupply efforts “made us vulnerable in ways that were exploited by the enemy.”

Do you believe this issue remains a challenge for the Department of Defense?

Yes. Supporting forward deployed troops and bases with fuel and water is a very expensive Air Force mission.

If you are confirmed, what specific steps will you take to unleash the Air Force from the tether of fuel?

I will support the continued research, development and deployment of technologies that reduce fuel use and turn waste into fuel and water at forward locations. I must recuse myself from particular matters involving the research being done at the South Dakota School of Mines.

If you are confirmed, what priorities would you establish for defense investments in and deployment of operational energy technologies to increase the combat capabilities of warfighters, reduce logistical burdens, and enhance mission assurance on our installations?

If confirmed I would continue to support a range of energy initiatives, particularly related to reducing the logistical burdens of energy supply at forward locations through advanced research and development.

On our installations, I would expect the Air Force to continue to enhance energy assurance by reducing reliance on single external sources of supply and improving energy efficiency in ways that save money. Efforts that provide the Air Force with the ability to continue operations, recover from energy interruptions, and sustain the mission are priorities.

If you are confirmed, how will you consider operational forces’ energy needs and vulnerabilities during training exercises, operational plans, and wargames?

I understand that war games and studies have concluded that while U.S. forces are considerably more lethal than in the mid-1990s, they consume more fuel. Adversary attacks on fuel storage and resupply systems should be factored into training exercises, operational plans, and wargames.

Energy and Acquisition

How can our acquisition systems better incorporate the use of energy in military platforms, and how, if at all, are assessments of future requirements taking into account energy needs as a key performance parameter?

When we buy systems, energy use should be a consideration.

Energy Resiliency in the fight against ISIL

Back in July after a coup attempt, the Turkish government cut off power to Incirlik Air Base, which is the primary platform for launching coalition airstrikes in the fight against ISIL. For roughly a week, deployed units had to operate relying backup generators, which is expensive and is certainly not the preferred method of operation given the demanding tempo of sorties against ISIL. Just last month, the Air Force described an incident in the past (via open source) in which a RPA mission based in the U.S. was flying a targeting mission overseas. Because of a power outage stateside, the RPA feed temporarily lost visual and the target was able to get “away and is able to continue plotting against the U.S. and our allies.”

If you are confirmed, how will you specifically address and make energy resiliency and mission assurance a priority for the Air Force, to including acquiring and deploying sustainable and renewable energy assets to improve combat capability for deployed units on our military installations and forward operating bases?

Ensuring the Air Force has the energy it requires where and when it needs it is critical to the mission. I am aware that recently the Air Force issued its overarching policy for energy projects. One of the priorities is to make sure critical missions and capabilities continue to have the energy to function. If confirmed, I will continue to support this effort.

Do you support the J-4’s enforcement of the energy supportability key performance parameter in the requirements process?

The energy key performance parameter is mandated by statute and Defense Department directive for all new acquisition programs that have an operational energy impact. The Air Force will comply with the requirement.

Section 2805 of the FY17 NDAA gave the Department new authority to plan and fund military construction projects directly related to energy resiliency and mission assurance, to help address and mitigate against incidents like Incirlik, not to mention secure micro-grids to help prevent cyber-attacks.

If you are confirmed, will you commit to use section 2805 to support mission critical functions, and address known energy vulnerabilities with projects that are resilient and renewable?

Yes

Environment

If confirmed, will you comply with environmental regulations, laws and guidance from the Environmental Protection Agency?

Yes

If confirmed, will you make the same level of investment for DOD's Environmental Research Programs?

I understand that the five year defense program plans level funding for environmental research. While I am not familiar with the focus and results of the environmental research program, in general, it is my perception that the Air Force should increase its research and development efforts.

If confirmed, will you work with the Department of Interior and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to find cooperative ways to ensure military readiness and protect the environment on and around U.S. military installations?

Yes

Management and Development of the Senior Executive Service (SES)

What is your vision for the management and development of the Air Force senior executive workforce, especially in the critically important areas of acquisition, financial management, and the scientific and technical fields?

If confirmed, I will assess the current Senior Executive Talent Management and Development processes and ensure our executives are equipped to lead and manage the Air Force. In particular, I will focus on the acquisition, financial management, and the scientific and technical fields.

Do you believe that the Air Force has the number of senior executives it needs, with the proper skills to manage the Department into the future?

If confirmed, I will evaluate if the Air Force has the right number of Senior Executives and if they have the skills required to successfully lead the Air Force.

Congressional Oversight

In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that

this Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of information.

Do you agree, if confirmed for this high position, to appear before this Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress?

Yes

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this Committee, or designated members of this Committee, and provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protection, with respect to your responsibilities as the Secretary of the Air Force?

Yes

Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings and other communications of information are provided to this Committee and its staff and other appropriate Committees?

Yes

Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted Committee, or to consult with the Committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

Yes

Advance Policy Questions for Heather Wilson
Nominee for Secretary of the Air Force

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION

Abusive On-Line Conduct

Recently, the Committee considered testimony on reports that certain members of an unofficial Marine Corps Facebook group were found to be posting degrading comments and sharing nude photos of female service members. Members of the group included a number of Active Duty service members, former military members, and military retirees.

What is the current Air Force policy for use of social media by airmen?

Specific to social media, I understand that the Air Force has testified that its social media policy does not tolerate bullying, hazing, or any instance where an Airman inflicts any form of physical or psychological abuse that degrades, insults, dehumanizes, or injures another Airman regardless of the method of communication. The Air Force expects Airmen to sustain a culture of trust, dignity and respect.

In your view, is this policy adequate to address abuses such as what occurred in the Marines United incident?

I am not in a position to make that determination at this time. I understand that the Air Force is currently reviewing its policy, practice, and legal authorities in this area. If confirmed, I will consider the analysis and recommendations that result from the Air Force review.

If confirmed, what action would you take to ensure that members of the Air Force are not subjected to abusive on-line conduct?

If confirmed, I will ensure the Air Force has policy, legal authority and training to prevent and to respond to abuses. I will expect leaders at all levels to reinforce the expectation that everyone is to be treated with dignity and respect.

What legislative authorities, if any, do you believe are necessary to address this problem?

At this time, I do not have any recommendation for additional legislative authority. I am aware the Department of Defense and the Air Force are reviewing current law and may recommend additional authority. If confirmed, I will participate in this review.