

Advance Policy Questions for Erin Conaton
Nominee for Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Defense Reforms

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Special Operations reforms have strengthened the war-fighting readiness of our Armed Forces. They have enhanced civilian control and clearly delineated the operational chain of command and the responsibilities and authorities of the combatant commanders, and the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They have also clarified the responsibility of the Military Departments to recruit, organize, train, equip, and maintain forces for assignment to the combatant commanders.

Do you see the need for modifications of any Goldwater-Nichols Act provisions?

I believe that the Goldwater-Nichols Act has greatly contributed to the strong framework for today's joint warfighting capabilities. It has significantly improved inter-service and joint relationships, promoting greater effectiveness of the Military departments and Combatant Commands.

If confirmed, I would plan to evaluate the joint officer management program to see if a recommendation of any specific changes would be beneficial. But my current sense is that today's system supports the objectives of the Goldwater-Nichols Act

If so, what areas do you believe might be appropriate to address in these modifications?

Currently I am unaware of any areas where modifications are needed. If I am confirmed, I would have an opportunity to assess any further need to legislative modifications, in consultation with the committee.

Qualifications

Field Code Changed

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

In general, I bring 14 years of experience working on a range of defense policy issues. As Minority and then Majority Staff Director of the House Armed Services Committee, I was the overall lead for the development of legislation and Congressional oversight, including in the areas of personnel and readiness. As Under Secretary of the Air Force and as Chief Management Officer of the Air Force, I have been significantly involved in a range of issues concerning military personnel, civilian personnel, family programs, and readiness. I look forward, if confirmed, to building on these experiences on behalf of the

Secretary of Defense and to the benefit of all Service members, their families, and our civilian workforce.

Major Challenges

In your view, what are the major challenges confronting the next Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness?

The new defense strategy and more constrained fiscal environment put the highest premium on sustaining the quality and readiness of the Total Force, particularly our exceptional all-volunteer uniformed force. The new strategy calls for an agile force ready for a broad variety of missions. As we complete the mission transition in Afghanistan, the Military Departments will all face challenges in improving readiness rates and posturing their services for the future security environment. We must also ensure appropriate compensation, health care, and personnel policies that recognize both the service and sacrifice undertaken by our troops and their families and the new budgetary realities.

At the same time, there are programmed reductions in Total Force military end-strength and continued workforce-shaping initiatives in our civilian force. Retention of the highest quality military and civilian force must be a top priority. For those that will leave service, we have an obligation to ensure each service member is as prepared as possible to succeed in civilian life, through a robust Transition Assistance Program and generous benefits. We must maintain the priority placed on the physical and mental health care, as well as the transition assistance, for our wounded, ill, and injured warriors.

Secretary Panetta has rightly placed great focus on the issue of sexual assault. Even one sexual assault is one too many and out of step with the core values of the American military. Additionally and critically, P&R must have a strong role with the Military Departments in continuing to address issues of mental health and suicide that plague too many.

If confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges?

If confirmed, I plan to ensure I clearly understand the priorities of Secretary Panetta and Deputy Secretary Carter. I would further familiarize myself with the range of policies and issues confronting the Department in these areas. I fully recognize this is a team sport and that substantial progress on these issues cannot be made without leadership and without close partnerships. I intend to work closely with the Congress; colleagues in the Office of Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, and the Military Departments and services; as well as with critical partners across the inter-agency to make progress on these challenges.

Duties

Section 136 of Title 10, United States Code, provides that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness shall perform such duties and exercise such powers as the Secretary of Defense may prescribe in the areas of military readiness, total force management, military and civilian personnel requirements, military and civilian personnel training, military-civilian family matters, exchange, commissary, and non-appropriated fund activities, personnel requirements for weapons support, National Guard and reserve components, and health affairs.

Assuming you are confirmed, what duties do you expect to be assigned to you?

If confirmed, I intend to carry out my responsibilities, functions, relationships, and authorities, in accordance with the law and consistent with DoD Directive 5124.2, "Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R))." I would be the Secretary of Defense's principal staff assistant and advisor in all matters relating to the management and well-being of military and civilian personnel in the DoD Total Force and for oversight of the readiness of this force. I would develop policies and provide oversight for the direction of plans and programs governing Total Force management as it relates to manpower; force management; planning; program integration; readiness; National Guard and Reserve component affairs; health affairs; training; personnel requirements and management; and compensation. This also includes equal opportunity, morale, welfare, recreation, and quality of life matters for both civilian and military personnel and their families.

In carrying out these duties, what would be your relationship with the following officials:

- **The Secretary of Defense**

If confirmed, I expect to serve the Secretary as his principal advisor and advocate for the management of human resources and readiness in the Department.

- **The Deputy Secretary of Defense**

If confirmed, I would expect my relationship with the Deputy Secretary to be fundamentally the same as that with the Secretary of Defense.

- **The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs**

If confirmed, ASD(HA) will be my principal advisor for all DoD health policies, programs, and force health protection activities.

- **The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs**

If confirmed, ASD(RA) will be my principal advisor for all Reserve component matters in the Department of Defense.

- **The Department of Defense General Counsel**

If confirmed, I would anticipate regular communication, coordination of actions, and exchange of views with the General Counsel and the attorneys assigned to focus on personnel policy matters. I would expect to seek and follow the advice of the General Counsel on legal, policy and procedural matters pertaining to the policies promulgated from the P&R office.

- **The Department of Defense Inspector General**

The DoD Inspector General is in charge of promoting integrity, accountability, and improvement of Department of Defense personnel, programs and operations to support the Department's mission and serve the public interest. If confirmed, I will fully assist in any investigations or issues that relate to personnel and readiness.

- **The Service Secretaries**

If confirmed, I would hope to work closely with the Secretaries of the Military Departments on all matters relating to the management well-being, and readiness of military and civilian personnel in the DoD Total Force structure.

- **The Chief of the National Guard Bureau**

The Chief, National Guard Bureau is a principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense, through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on matters involving non-federalized National Guard forces and on other matters as determined by the Secretary of Defense. If confirmed, I look forward to a continued strong relationship, through ASD(RA), to ensure effective integration of National Guard capabilities into a cohesive Total Force.

- **The Assistant Secretaries for Manpower and Reserve Affairs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force**

If confirmed, I would intend to further strengthen the partnership with these officials in carrying out the human resource obligations of the Services for the Total Force.

- **The Deputy Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Air Force for Personnel, the Chief of Naval Personnel, and the Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps for Manpower and Reserve Affairs**

If confirmed, I intend to partner in effective working relationships with these

officers to ensure that DoD attracts, motivates and retains the quality people it needs.

- **The combatant commanders**

If confirmed, I intend to work to understand the combat needs and Total Force concerns of these critical commanders.

- **The Joint Staff, particularly the Director for Manpower and Personnel (J-1)**

If confirmed, I intend to partner a close coordinating relationship with the Joint Staff regarding manpower and personnel policy issues.

Systems and Support for Wounded Warriors

Service members and civilians who are wounded and injured performing duties in Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn deserve the highest priority from their Service and the Federal Government for support services, healing and recuperation, rehabilitation, evaluation for return to duty, successful transition from active duty if required, and continuing support beyond retirement or discharge. Yet, as the revelations at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) in 2007 illustrated and as ongoing problems with the Integrated Disability Evaluation System continue to demonstrate, the Services were not prepared to meet the needs of returning wounded service members and civilians. Despite the enactment of legislation and renewed emphasis, many challenges remain.

What is your assessment of the progress made to date by the Department of Defense and the Services to improve the care, management, and transition of seriously ill and injured service members and their families?

The Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy was established by Congress to ensure wounded, ill, injured, and transitioning Service members receive quality care and seamless transition support through proactive leadership, responsive policy, effective oversight and interagency collaboration.

The Department and Department of Veterans Affairs have made some progress by reducing overall disability evaluation time from 500 days to under 400 days and reducing the post-separation wait for VA disability. However, much work remains to be done. If confirmed, this will be a top priority. I will continue the effort to ensure a seamless transition from recovery to reintegration for our wounded, ill or injured. Additionally, I would continue the Department's collaborative efforts with the VA on compensation and

benefits, transition assistance and care coordination. I would look forward to working with Congress on this critical issue.

What are the strengths upon which continued progress should be based?

The greatest strength is the Department's commitment to take care of its wounded warriors and their families. That commitment should guide continued efforts by the Department and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

What are the weaknesses that need to be corrected?

The challenges lie in being continually vigilant to ensure every recovering Service member and family receive the full care they need and deserve. Improving the Integrated Disability Evaluation System is critical in that regard. Much work remains to be done.

If confirmed, are there additional strategies and resources that you would pursue to increase support for wounded service members and their families, and to monitor their progress in returning to duty or to civilian life?

Providing needed care and support for Service members, Veterans and their families should be and is an utmost priority for the Department. If confirmed, I will have the opportunity to consult with the committee and to evaluate what additional support, in resources and/or authority, is necessary to address the needs of the wounded Service members and their families.

What is your assessment of the adequacy of access to care and care management for federal civilian employees who are ill or injured in theater, including evaluation and response to traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress? - CPP

I understand federal civilian employees have access to emergency treatment in theater for illness, disease, injuries, or wounds sustained while forward deployed in support of U.S. military forces, and continued treatment in Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs). If confirmed, I will review efforts to include the evaluation of traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress for deployed civilian employees.

Studies conducted as a result of the revelations at WRAMC pointed to the need to reform the disability evaluation system (DES), and the Services have now moved to the Integrated DES program to improve processing of service members. Nevertheless, the processing times under the Integrated DES, initially encouraging, are now worsening, and the system appears to be overloaded.

What is your assessment of the Integrated DES?

The events of the past ten years showed the Department was not fully prepared to meet the needs of the Nation's returning wounded Service members. Multiple bipartisan commissions confirmed the need to streamline and improve the Department's disability evaluation system. I agree with their general conclusions that the system needs to be improved and processing time needs to be reduced significantly and with a sense of urgency. Some progress has been made but much more needs to be done. This will require continued leadership by both this Department and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

What is your assessment of the need to further streamline and improve the Integrated DES?

It is my understanding that much work remains. I believe the Department has an obligation to our Service members participating in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (DES) to proactively evaluate the program and apply lessons learned. Whenever two systems are merged that are governed by separate statutes and with separate purposes, there is always friction; but those friction points are opportunities for improvement. IDES highlights the need for better record sharing and case management tracking tools across the Department and VA. If confirmed, I plan to look at all aspects of the system to see where opportunities exist for improvement. Additionally, I believe that leadership by both the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs is critical to ensuring programs like the IDES are successful.

If confirmed, how will you address any need for change?

If confirmed, I will continue the Department's work (with the Department of Veterans Affairs) toward improving the timeliness of the disability evaluation system. I will carry on the Department's commitment to providing a comprehensive, fair, and timely medical and administrative processing system to evaluate our injured or ill Service members' fitness for continued service. If confirmed, I would look forward to the opportunity to work with this committee to understand your views on further improvements to care for our wounded ill and injured Service members.

Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs Collaboration

The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs have in recent years increased collaboration between the respective departments to support military service members as they transition to veteran status in areas of health and mental health care, disability evaluation, and compensation.

If confirmed, what role would you expect to play in ensuring that the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs achieve the Administration's objectives in DoD and VA collaboration?

If confirmed, I will be intimately involved in the collaboration between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs and would look forward to a strong partnership. I fully support the vision of a single experience of lifetime service through a partnership that establishes a national model for excellence, quality, access, satisfaction, and value. I will do my utmost to provide leadership that enables the interagency effort. I would look forward to co-chairing – with the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs – the revitalized Joint Executive Committee to work on the range of issues that ensure that transitioning Service members receive the benefits, care and transition assistance they deserve.

Disability Severance Pay

Section 1646 of the Wounded Warrior Act, included in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, enhanced severance pay and removed a requirement that severance pay be deducted from VA disability compensation for service members discharged for disabilities rated less than 30% incurred in the line-of-duty in a combat zone or incurred during the performance of duty in combat-related operation as designated by the Secretary of Defense. In adopting this provision, Congress relied on the existing definition of a combat-related disability contained in 10 U.S.C. 1413a(e). Rather than using the definition intended by Congress, the Department of Defense adopted a more limited definition of combat-related operations, requiring that the disability be incurred during participation in armed conflict.

What is your understanding of the number of service members impacted by the DOD interpretation of "combat-related disability," and how the DOD interpretation affects their compensation?

Although I do not yet know the details, it is my understanding that a review of the policy implementing Section 1646 of the Wounded Warrior Act is currently underway. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with this committee once that review has been completed.

If confirmed, will you reconsider the Department's definition of combat-related operations for purposes of awarding enhanced severance pay and deduction of severance pay from VA disability compensation?

If confirmed, I would look into the status of this review to ensure that any policy change relating to the definition, if warranted, meets the intent of Congress and is consistent with the governing statute.

Repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

What is your assessment of the effect on the force of the repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy?

The Services and Combatant Commands continue to provide monthly progress reports on the implementation of repeal to the Secretary of Defense. To date, and based on these reports, repeal is going smoothly with no significant repeal-related issues identified. I believe this success can be attributed to comprehensive pre-repeal training programs, the discipline of our Service members, and continued close monitoring and enforcement of standards by our military leaders at all levels.

What is your view on the issue of providing military benefits to same-sex partners?

It is my understanding that the Department is conducting a deliberative and comprehensive review of the possibility of extending eligibility for some benefits, when legally permitted, to same-sex partners of military personnel. Before recommending the extension of any particular benefit, I believe it is necessary to complete the ongoing, holistic review of all benefits to fully identify second and third order effects, and to ensure consistency in the benefit decision-making process.

If confirmed, what actions if any would you pursue in this regard?

If confirmed, I will continue to ensure the Department and our Service members remain fully committed to the implementation effort, consistent with our standards of military readiness, effectiveness, unit cohesion, and recruiting and retention of the Armed Forces. I will also provide leadership, if still ongoing, in the benefits review and any recommendations made to the Secretary of Defense and the Congress.

Religious Guidelines

What is your understanding of current policies and programs of the Department of Defense regarding religious practices in the military?

It is my understanding the Department does not endorse the establishment of religion, but it does guarantee its free exercise. The Department and the Military Services ensure Service members' rights to observe the tenets of their respective religions or to hold no specific religious conviction or affiliation.

In your view, do these policies appropriately accommodate religious practices that require adherents to wear particular articles of faith or adhere to certain grooming practices related to faith?

It is my understanding that current policies allow for consideration of accommodations of religious apparel that are neat and conservative and do not interfere with the performance of military duties. Current policy does not address accommodations for grooming practices, and therefore this policy is under review for possible revisions. If confirmed, I would continue to monitor and evaluate this ongoing review.

In your view, do these policies appropriately accommodate the free exercise of religion and other beliefs without impinging on those who have different beliefs, including no religious belief?

Yes, in my view, current policies accommodate the free exercise of religion for all Service members including those with no religious belief.

In your view, do existing policies and practices regarding public prayers offered by military chaplains in a variety of formal and informal settings strike the proper balance between a chaplain's ability to pray in accordance with his or her religious beliefs and the rights of other service members with different beliefs, including no religious beliefs?

It is my understanding that existing policies provide the military chaplaincy with sufficient guidance that allows them to balance their own faith practices with respect to the beliefs of others in both formal and informal setting. They continue to focus on providing for the free exercise of religion within the pluralistic environment of the military.

The Independent Review Related to Fort Hood observed that "DOD policy regarding religious accommodation lacks the clarity necessary to help commanders distinguish appropriate religious practices from those that might indicate a potential for violence or self-radicalization." Recommendation 2.7 of the Final Recommendations urged the Department to update policy to clarify guidelines for religious accommodation and Recommendation 2.8 urged the Department to task the Defense Science Board to "undertake a multi-disciplinary study to identify behavioral indicators of violence and self-radicalization..."

What is your view of this recommendation?

It is my understanding that these two recommendations are still under Departmental review. If confirmed, evaluating the adequacy of policies concerning the safeguarding of our Service members would be a top priority.

Will you work to ensure that a scientific fact-based approach to understanding radicalization will drive the Department's relevant policies on this topic?

Yes. If confirmed, I would review plans currently in place to address these challenges, and determine what, if any, changes should be made. I would collaborate with my

colleagues in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Services, the Joint Staff as well as the Congress in charting the right course for the Department.

Protection of U.S. Forces Against Internal Threats

A Department of Defense review of the Fort Hood attack released in January 2010 concluded that the Department was poorly prepared to defend against internal threats, including radicalization of military personnel.

What is your assessment of the lessons learned from the tragedy at Fort Hood?

It is my understanding the Department has undertaken extensive reviews to ensure that guidance resulting from this tragedy is actionable and to implement systems that will allow us to mitigate such incidents in the future. I also understand the Department has promulgated new guidance to the field to assist commanders in evaluating and responding to uncertain situations based on lessons learned. If confirmed, I look forward to becoming more familiar with the application of these lessons in the field.

If confirmed, what strategies would you advocate to prevent and mitigate such threats in the future?

If confirmed, I would work closely with Department leadership to strengthen the areas identified by the Ft Hood Independent Review to include mitigating violence in the workplace, ensuring commanders/supervisors have access to appropriate personnel records, and integrating and strengthening force protection policies. Furthermore, I would work closely with our medical community to give commanders a better understanding of how to identify violence indicators.

Muslims in the U. S. Military

Are you concerned that the attack at Ft. Hood could lead to harassment or even violence against Muslims in the military?

I believe, by law, every Service member has the right to practice their religious faith without fear of persecution or retribution. If confirmed, I will review policies to ensure adequate physical and emotional safety from religious harassment is guaranteed and will take appropriate action if needed.

If confirmed, what strategies would you advocate to address the potential for harassment or violence against Muslims in the U. S. military?

I believe safeguarding the rights of Service members requires both formal and informal feedback procedures that quickly identify and assess any harassment, should it occur.

Responses to grievances or any identified shortcomings must be quick, thoughtful, and effective. If confirmed, I would review the viability of these feedback systems, and take measures to correct them as appropriate.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

The Department has developed comprehensive policies and procedures to improve the prevention of and response to incidents of sexual assaults, including providing appropriate resources and care for victims of sexual assault. However, numerous incidents of sexual misconduct involving military personnel are still being reported. Victims and their advocates claim that they are victimized twice: first by attackers in their own ranks and then by unresponsive or inadequate treatment for the victim. They assert that their command fails to respond appropriately with basic medical services and with an adequate investigation of their charges followed by a failure to hold assailants accountable.

Do you consider the current sexual assault policies and procedures to be effective?

Sexual assault simply has no place in the Military and is antithetical to its core values. It is my understanding the Department continues to put considerable effort into the development of policies and procedures designed to address sexual assault. If confirmed, I will review those policies and partner with the Services to continue to better educate and train the force to reduce the number of cases. I will also work with them, if there is an assault, to ensure the Department provides appropriate care to victims and commanders hold offenders accountable.

What problems, if any, are you aware of in the manner in which the confidential reporting procedure has been put into operation?

I am not currently aware of any specific problems in implementation of the confidential reporting option, called restricted reporting. I am aware the Department has extended the restricted reporting option to Service members' dependents 18 years and older. I am also aware the restriction of no investigation when a victim chooses restricted reporting has concerned commanders responsible for the action of their unit members. I believe the Department must find a balance between victim care and offender accountability but of the utmost importance is that victims feel they can come forward to obtain the support they need following an assault.

Sexual assault victims who elected restricted reporting and leave the military may need to access their records for medical treatment and to help them receive benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Under Restricted Reports, the victim's confidentiality is a key focus. As a result, separate document retention guidelines were designed to respect the Service member's desire for confidentiality. In cases of Restricted Reports (where law enforcement and command are not contacted) the Military Services must maintain a

hard copy of certain records and the Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Exam (SAFE Kit) for five years.

What is your view of the steps the Services have taken to prevent and respond to sexual assaults in combat zones, including assaults against contractor personnel?

It is my understanding the Department has a program in place to ensure Service members deploying to combat zones are appropriately informed about how to prevent sexual assault and what to do should it occur. I am aware the Department has made great efforts to ensure all victims of sexual assaults – including those deployed – are able to receive the same level of support as those stationed stateside. The Department recently enacted a new policy to ensure that Department civilian employees stationed abroad and Department U.S. citizen contractors in combat areas receive emergency care and access to Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and victim advocates. If confirmed, I will continue these efforts.

What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources the Services have in place to investigate and respond to allegations of sexual assault?

I know that all Services have been directed to establish guidelines for a 24-hour, 7-day per week sexual assault response capability for all locations, including deployed areas. I also understand the Services are working towards increasing the training and expertise of those investigating and prosecuting sexual assaults. If confirmed, I will partner with the Services to ensure adequate resources are dedicated to the training of those investigators and prosecutors.

What is your view of the willingness and ability of the Services to hold assailants accountable for their acts?

I strongly believe that anyone who commits a sexual assault in the military needs to be held accountable. This shows victims that taking the difficult step of assisting with an investigation will help ensure the safety of their fellow Service members and demonstrates to would-be perpetrators that they will face justice. Secretary Panetta directed an assessment, due at the end of May, on how we train officers selected for command and key senior enlisted leaders on sexual assault prevention and response, and what we can do to strengthen that training. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that accountability remains a key priority. I echo Secretary Panetta's regret that such crimes occur in the U.S. military and I will do all I can to prevent these sexual assaults from occurring in the Department of Defense.

If confirmed, what actions will you take to ensure senior level direction and oversight of efforts to prevent and respond to sexual assaults?

Sexual assault is a crime which reaches across the Department, and as such, response and accountability efforts need to have the same reach. I am aware that in January 2012, Secretary of Defense Panetta directed an assessment be completed on Sexual Assault Prevention and Response training for officers selected for command and key senior noncommissioned officers. If confirmed, I will follow up on any recommendations to ensure our most senior leaders receive the necessary training and resources to combat sexual assault. I will also ensure the Department has the correct structure in place to engage the Departmental leadership, and the leadership of other agencies such as the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Health and Human Services, and Justice, in planning, guiding, and evaluating our efforts. I will also work with the Services and other OSD and Joint Staff partners on issues of perpetrator accountability.

Hazing

The press has recently reported numerous serious hazing incidents in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. In the Army and Marine Corps incidents, the victims allegedly committed suicide following the hazing.

Does the Department of Defense have a policy addressing hazing in the services? If so, what is the policy?

I believe the Department has a clear “no hazing” policy, implemented by each Service, to include mandatory training to prevent hazing. Secretary of Defense Panetta reinforced the existing policy against hazing with a personal message to the force in December 2011. Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), there are disciplinary and legal consequences of hazing. Furthermore, hazing is explicitly prohibited at each of the Service academies.

If confirmed, what actions will you take to address the issue of hazing?

If confirmed, I would reemphasize the Department’s policies prohibiting hazing. I would work closely with the Services to review their education and training in this area and to make updates as appropriate. Finally I would review reporting procedures, strengthen climate survey mechanisms, and increase awareness of hazing at all levels of the chain of command.

Service Academies

What do you consider to be the policy and procedural elements that must be in place at each of the service academies in order to prevent and respond appropriately to sexual assaults and sexual harassment and to ensure essential oversight?

I believe that, as in the general force, even one sexual assault at a service academy is too many. The academies are a critical commissioning source for those who will lead our service members. From their earliest military education, it must be clear that there is no place for sexual harassment or assault in our military; it is antithetical to the core values by which Service members live and serve.

I believe the Department's general sexual assault and sexual harassment policies provide a foundation for combating sexual misconduct at the Service academies. It is my understanding the academies have institutionalized prevention and response programs that encourage victims to come forward and hold offenders accountable. I further understand the Department reviews the efforts of the academies annually and requires biannual updates on the outcome of the review. If confirmed, I would continue rigorous oversight and determine whether additional measures need to be taken.

What is your assessment of measures taken at the service academies to ensure religious tolerance and respect, and to prevent sexual assaults and sexual harassment?

If confirmed, I look forward to familiarizing myself with what each of the Service academies have been doing to ensure religious respect and tolerance. At the USAF Academy, since 2009, chaplains have been intentional and deliberate in working with commanders, students, and civilian religious leaders to ensure free exercise of religion or the choice to have no religion remains a time-honored tradition. I believe it is imperative that leaders, at all levels, must continue to ensure every member of the Department respects the spirit and intent of laws and policies surrounding this free exercise.

On the topic of sexual assault, it is my understanding the academies have institutionalized prevention and response programs that encourage victims to come forward and that hold offenders accountable. I further understand the Department reviews the efforts of the academies annually and requires biannual updates on the outcome of the review. If confirmed, I would continue that rigorous oversight and determine whether additional measures need to be taken.

Women in the Military

In recent years, the Navy has opened service on submarines to women and the Marine Corps has expanded service opportunities for women in intelligence specialties. The issue of the appropriate combat role of women in the armed forces is a matter of continuing interest to Congress and the American public. In a recent interview with the *Washington Post*, General Peter Chiarelli stated his belief that all military occupations, including combat occupations, should be open to women who can meet appropriate functional standards.

Do you agree with General Chiarelli's position on assignment policies that restrict women in combat?

I believe the Department is committed to pursuing the elimination of gender-restricted policies, where feasible, while maintaining force readiness. If confirmed, I would continue the Department's commitment to remove barriers that prevent Service members from serving in any capacity based on their ability and qualifications, not constrained by gender-restrictive policies.

Do you believe additional specialties should be opened up for service by women?

The Department's recent report on women in the services commits the Department to review the opening of additional positions and occupations to women through the establishment of gender-neutral physical standards. I understand the Services will be assessing the positions they have requested to be opened under an exception to policy. The Department will use their experiences regarding the suitability and relevance of the prohibition on direct ground combat unit assignment, as well as ongoing research, to inform future policy decisions.

Do you believe any changes in the current policy regarding women in combat are needed?

Until the additional assessment is completed, I do not at this time. It is my understanding the Services will be assessing the positions they have requested to be opened under an exception to policy. The Department will use their experiences regarding the suitability and relevance of the prohibition on direct ground combat unit assignment, as well as ongoing research, to inform future policy decisions.

If confirmed, I will continue ongoing efforts in this area.

The Department of Defense has recently submitted to Congress the report on its review of all gender-restricting policies, which will result in further changes in DOD policy to remove barriers to women serving in certain military roles.

What is your assessment of the findings of this report?

It is my understanding that, while the findings of this report did not indicate women have less than equitable opportunities to compete and excel under the current assignment policy, the Services requested changes to current assignment policy, based upon their combat experiences over the last decade in Iraq and Afghanistan. I support the exceptions to policy made, after thoughtful consideration, by the Services and would look forward to continuing the ongoing work contemplated by this report.

If confirmed, how will you ensure that the findings of this report are implemented throughout the Department of Defense?

It is my understanding the Secretary of Defense charged the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness as the focal point for reporting the progress of the Services in their efforts to pursue gender-neutral physical standards, assessing newly opened positions, and identifying any further positions that can be opened. If confirmed, I will work with the Services to continue the Secretary's commitment to removing barriers that prevent Service members from serving in any capacity based on their ability and qualifications, not constrained by gender-restrictive policies.

Rising Costs of Medical Care

In testimony presented to Congress in February, 2009, the Assistant Director of the Congressional Budget Office asserted that "medical funding accounts for more than one-third of the growth projected for operations and support funding between 2009 and 2026." In April, 2009, Secretary Gates told an audience at Maxwell Air Force Base that "health care is eating the Department alive." In recent years, the Department has attempted to address this growth through various fee increases on military retirees. The Department's preliminary budget briefings for fiscal year 2013 confirm that the growth in military health care costs continues to outpace the growth in the rest of the defense budget.

What is your assessment of the long-term impact of rising medical costs on future Department of Defense plans?

I am informed that Department estimates indicate these costs could rise to over 10 percent of the Department budget in just a few years. These costs cannot be ignored, and in these fiscally constrained times, we must achieve an appropriate balance among compensation, force structure, and modernization. To address these rapidly rising costs, the Department has put forward comparatively modest increases in the beneficiary costs shares to be phased in over several years. If confirmed, I would work to ensure the Department continues to provide high quality care for our Service members and their families, while also ensuring we remain good stewards of the Nation's resources. All compensation changes should be viewed through the lens of maintaining the strength of the all-volunteer-force.

If confirmed, what actions would you initiate or recommend to the Secretary of Defense to mitigate the effect of such costs on the DOD top-line?

If confirmed, I would work closely with our healthcare leadership in the Department to examine every opportunity to assure military beneficiaries are provided the highest quality care possible while managing cost growth and to provide that advice to the Secretary of Defense.

What reforms in infrastructure, benefits, or benefit management, if any, do you think should be examined in order to control the costs of military health care?

I believe to control the costs of military healthcare, the Department needs to continue to evaluate all possibilities including infrastructure costs, provider payments, administrative costs, and the benefit structure. If confirmed, I would examine the costs of the direct care facilities, determining where efficiencies can be gained and investing wisely in infrastructure requirements. I would look at the efficiencies in procuring healthcare services in the civilian market, I would look for ways to streamline administrative functions to minimize duplication efforts, and, finally I would evaluate the benefit structure to see where reasonable changes could occur.

Personnel and Entitlement Costs

In addition to health care costs, personnel and related entitlement spending continue to grow and is becoming an ever increasing portion of the DOD budget. In order to combat this trend, the Department is recommending that Congress establish a commission with “BRAC-like authority” to conduct a comprehensive review of the military retirement benefit “in the context of total military compensation.”

What do you think the charter of this Commission should focus on, and do you agree that in this context the military retirement benefit should include retiree health care and survivor benefits?

Military retirement is an enormous, complex, and sensitive area, which includes disability retirements and the Survivor Benefit Plan. I believe an independent, BRAC-like Commission is the best vehicle to explore possible alternatives to the current system. Healthcare is a very different, separate area, and I understand the Department already has proposed other changes to the healthcare system. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Congress on the Department’s healthcare proposals, and at this time would not recommend inserting healthcare into the charter of the Commission.

Do you agree that in the event reforms are enacted that the retirement benefits of current service members should be grandfathered and, if so, what is the soonest that substantial savings would be realized by the Department?

I believe Secretary Panetta phrased it best when he said, “With any proposed changes to the retirement system, current members should be grandfathered.” Assuming we grandfather current members, we would expect to see modest savings in the near term after implementation. The greatest savings would take effect in the later years as the proportion of the force covered by any proposed, new system increases.

What steps has the Department taken to evaluate the military system of compensation and benefits, and should this commission also consider compensation and benefits reform?

It is my understanding the Department is evaluating changes to the military compensation system, and is focusing first on military retirement. I believe the Department has been conducting an internal review to identify and evaluate retirement alternatives. If the Congress establishes an independent commission to review military retirement as requested by the Administration, if confirmed I will ensure the Department will provide the Commission with a formal proposal. Following the review of military retirement, the Department plans to continue its comprehensive review of military compensation to ensure it maintains the Nation's all-volunteer-force in the most cost conscious manner. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Congress in considering potential military retirement system alternatives as well as other possible compensation and benefits reforms.

Is the Department currently evaluating the military system of compensation and benefits, or should this commission also consider compensation and benefits reform?

I understand the Department is evaluating changes to the military compensation system as a whole, and is focusing first on military retirement. Following the review of military retirement, I believe the Department plans to continue its comprehensive review of military compensation to ensure we maintain the Nation's all volunteer force in the most cost conscious manner. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Congress in considering other compensation and benefits reforms. At this time, however, I do not believe it is appropriate to insert additional compensation and benefits reform into the charter for the Commission.

What actions do you believe can be taken to control the rise in personnel costs and entitlement spending?

I am aware that an increasing proportion of the Department's resources are devoted to personnel-related costs. I believe it is imperative to remember when we discuss "personnel costs" that our actions affect the lives of our Service members and their families. Moreover, our compensation system should aim to ensure we can continue to recruit and retain a high-quality all-volunteer-force.

I believe the Department must balance its responsibilities to our Service members, to the Nation, and to the taxpayers. We must be ready to fulfill our mission, while using our resources wisely. As such, I believe it is appropriate to periodically review the military compensation system. I understand the Department's leadership has already started down this path, and if confirmed, I look forward to working with the Department and Congress on this issue.

I understand the Department's review of the military retirement system is in progress, and after the Department provides input to the Commission, I expect the Department's comprehensive review will continue to other parts of the compensation and benefits system.

Mental Health

Senior military leaders increasingly recognize the need to reduce the stigma for military personnel and their families and veterans in seeking mental health care.

If confirmed, what role would you expect to play in expanding the breadth of this message to military personnel and their families?

If confirmed, I would support ongoing Department efforts to combat stigma and increase help-seeking behavior among Service members, their families, and affected civilians. The Services are currently heavily engaged in this effort. However, I am prepared to provide the Service Chiefs with whatever resources are necessary to expand the breadth of the outreach efforts. I fully support the Department's efforts to improve health and mental healthcare services, and reduce the stigma of mental healthcare for our men and women in uniform, their families, and affected civilians.

Suicide Prevention - Readiness

The numbers of suicides in each of the services has increased in recent years. The Army released a report in June 2010 that analyzed the causes of its growing suicide rate and examined disturbing trends in drug use, disciplinary offenses, and high risk behaviors.

If confirmed, what role would you play in shaping Department of Defense policies to help prevent suicides both in garrison and in theater and to increase the resiliency of all service members and their families?

Suicide is a difficult, ongoing issue across the Services and is deserving of continued commander and senior leader attention. I believe the Department must support a culture to promote health and resiliency. This requires both military and civilian leaders throughout the ranks to provide the requisite support. If confirmed, I will partner with the Services to ensure suicide prevention is emphasized in training at all levels and to ensure necessary access to care. I will focus on finding best practices and using them to provide guidance from which the Services can operate their suicide prevention programs across the Total Force.

What is your understanding of the action that the Office of the Secretary of Defense is taking in response to the June 2010 Army report, and the data in Chapter 3 in particular?

Chapter 3 focuses on “The Lost Art of Leadership in Garrison” and discusses the challenges of an overall increase in high risk behavior, the fragmentation of programs designed to address the high risk behavior, and the atrophy of garrison leadership skills over the past decade. Although most of the recommendations were derived from Army-specific data, some recommendations have applied broadly to the other Services. It is my understanding that the Services have since strengthened leadership involvement at all levels. Examples include emphasis on the commander’s role in creating a positive command climate and encouraging help-seeking behaviors specifically aimed at reducing the stigma associated with receiving behavioral healthcare. I am also told that the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is leading a collaborative effort across the Department to implement the recommendations contained in the DoD Task Force Report. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Service and other partners on this issue.

Readiness Responsibilities

Section 136 of title 10, United States Code, gives the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness certain responsibilities for military readiness. Some important issues that affect military readiness, however, such as logistics and materiel readiness, have been placed under the jurisdiction of the Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics.

What is your understanding of the responsibilities of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness in ensuring military readiness, including materiel readiness?

It is my understanding that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness oversees both the policy for and the monitoring of military readiness for the Secretary. This includes the oversight of civilian and military training and education, personnel and medical readiness, and the analysis of broad mission assessments from the Combatant Commanders regarding the readiness of key units in support of the Secretary’s deployment decisions in execution of the National Military Strategy.

As the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics oversees materiel readiness, and materiel readiness is an important part of overall military readiness, if confirmed, I will work closely with my Department counterpart on items specific to the management of materiel readiness.

What are the most critical objectives to improve readiness reporting and monitoring of the military forces, and if confirmed, how would you work with the Military Departments as well as other Office of the Secretary of Defense offices to achieve them?

After more than a decade of conflict and given a new defense strategy, improving the readiness of our force for the range of missions envisioned in that strategy is critically

important. This will require increased training efforts as the current operations tempo improves, as well as efforts to ensure units have the people and equipment they need to be mission-ready. Secretary Panetta committed that even as the force becomes smaller, it will be a ready and agile force. If confirmed, I would see my role as providing assessments to the Secretary of how the force is doing in this regard, along with recommendations of how to improve or mitigate any negative trends we might observe.

To do so, I would intend to work with the Services to ensure such accurate and timely readiness assessments of our military forces and to implement any mitigations that may be needed. Only with accurate assessments can the Department effectively plan and manage forces. If confirmed, I would intend to partner strongly with the Services, the Joint Staff, and other OSD partners.

Do you believe the current readiness reporting system accurately shows if our forces are not only “ready” but “ready for what”?

I believe the intent of the current readiness reporting system is to provide a holistic view of the Services’ ability to accomplish those missions assigned by the President and the Secretary of Defense. This is a complex undertaking though and current reporting can be improved. The Defense Readiness Reporting System directly addresses the “ready for what” question by focusing on mission capability. It assesses the readiness of all organizations throughout the Department to perform their assigned missions as well as the individual tasks that support those missions. If confirmed, I will work with the Services, Joint Staff, and OSD partners to continue improvements in readiness reporting.

What is your understanding of the responsibilities of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness with respect to the Global Response Force?

I understand the responsibility of the USD(P&R) is to provide policy guidance regarding the readiness monitoring for the units that comprise the Global Readiness Force, and in collaboration with the Joint Staff, identify readiness deficiencies and recommend mitigation options for the Secretary.

End Strength Reductions

Last year, the Department announced plans to reduce the active-duty end strengths of the Army and Marine Corps. This year, the Department has laid out a new defense strategy that will call for even deeper cuts to the ground forces, proposing eventual end strengths of 490,000 for the Army and 182,000 for the Marine Corps over the next five years.

What is your understanding of the Army’s and Marine Corps’ ability to meet these goals without forcing out many soldiers and marines who have served in combat

over the past 10 years with the implicit promise that they could compete for career service and retirement?

These reductions in force, while appropriate to the new strategy, inherently come with challenges for separating Service members and their families. I support Secretary Panetta's commitment to accomplish needed reductions in as humane and supportive a way as possible. I believe the Department's policy of using voluntary measures before considering involuntary separations is the right one. My understanding is that OUSD(P&R) is working with the Services to ensure they provide Service members with as much advanced notice as possible of their Service's drawdown plans and the likelihood of their being retained. In addition, the Department is working with partners in the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor to further strengthen the Transition Assistance Program for any separating Service members.

I believe programmed reductions must be carefully and deliberately managed to preserve force readiness. I am aware the Services have a range of authorities to affect these reductions. If confirmed, I would work with the Services and the Congress to identify any additional authorities that might prove beneficial in handling these reductions effectively.

What programs are in place to ensure that separating and retiring service members are as prepared as they can be as they enter a struggling economy? CPP

I understand the Department's current Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is in place to help separating and retiring Service members in their transition to civilian life, to include preparation for a successful post-military career. The program consists of pre-separation counseling; an employment workshop conducted by the Department of Labor; a benefits briefing provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs; and one-on-one counseling based on individual Service member requirements. I am aware the Department is expanding and enhancing TAP to maximize the career-readiness of Service members, and is working with other agencies in developing a clear path to civilian employment; admission into and success in an academic or technical training program; or successful start-up of an independent business entity or non-profit organization. The Department's efforts here are furthered by Congressional action in the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011.

How fast can the Army and Marine Corps responsibly and fairly reduce end strength while maintaining the integrity and readiness of combat units?

I understand the Department expects to draw down the Army from 562,000 to 490,000 by the end of FY 2017, and the Marine Corps from over 202,100 to 182,100 by the end of FY 2016. My understanding is that the respective Services believe these drawdowns can be achieved on these timelines. In making the forces leaner, the Department should take care to learn the lessons of previous drawdowns. Our military must also still be able to respond to any large-scale mobilization against us. This will require careful consideration

by Services about their organizational structures and their ability to reconstitute and mobilize forces. These reductions must be done with an eye toward those who have already served in combat and for those with families who have experienced extended separations, by maximizing voluntary programs and using the full range of authorities provided by Congress.

What is your understanding of the need for additional force shaping tools requiring legislation beyond what Congress provided in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012?

It is my understanding that the Department may require legislative authorities that allow targeted reductions and maximum flexibility in achieving reductions both in the Active and Reserve Components. If confirmed, I will quickly become familiar with the proposals under consideration and work with the Congress to address any concerns.

Medical Personnel Recruiting and Retention

The Department of Defense continues to face significant shortages in critically needed military medical personnel in both the active and reserve components. The Committee is concerned that growing medical support requirements will compound the already serious challenges faced in recruitment and retention of military medical, dental, nurse, and behavioral health personnel.

What is your understanding of the shortages of health care professionals in the Department of Defense and the sufficiency of the plans to meet recruiting and retention goals?

Regarding military healthcare, it is my understanding that Health Professions Officer strength is at 100% overall, but the Department does have shortage specialties. Specialties of concern below 90% are Cardiothoracic Surgery, Critical Care Trauma Medicine, Neurosurgery, Nuclear Medicine, and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. If confirmed, one of my goals will be to improve the recruitment and retention of health professional specialties which currently fall below manning requirements. Congress has already given the Department broad authority to provide special and incentive pays for all health professional officers within 37 USC Section 335, "Consolidation of Special Pay and Bonus Authority." I also believe there is an increased need for civilian providers within the military direct healthcare system and the Department must remain competitive to recruit from the civilian labor market.

What legislative and policy initiatives, including bonuses and special pays, do you think may be necessary to ensure that the military services can continue to meet medical support requirements?

I believe with “Consolidation of Special Pays and Bonus Authority” 37 USC 335 that the Department has adequate tools to address Health Professions Officer retention and recruitment issues in both Active Duty and the Reserves. If confirmed, I will continue to support these programs and adjust based on recruitment and retention needs. I remain in strong support of the Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP) that provides the majority of our physicians and dentists.

Military Accessions Vital to National Interest Program

Under the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program, the Services may recruit non-permanent resident aliens who have certain high-demand medical or linguistic skills for service in the armed forces, and offer them an expedited path to citizenship. Although the Services have enjoyed extraordinary recruiting and retention in recent years, some specialties remain under strength. While limited in scope, the program appeared successful and worthy of expansion, but was halted after the initial quota was reached so the Department could assess its utility and perform a security review.

What is the status of the MAVNI program and the security review?

It is my understanding that recruiting under MAVNI began in February 2009, for a one-year pilot that recruited 1,000 personnel. The program was extended in August 2010; however, implementation was delayed pending development of directed enhanced security screening protocols. The screening protocols were signed on February 16, and a package is being finalized to extend the pilot for a two-year period.

When will the program be restarted?

I believe the Department is in the process of completing a two-year extension of the MAVNI pilot program and anticipate that it will restart by summer 2012 for a full two-year pilot program.

Medical Marijuana

What is your assessment on the need for legitimate scientific study of the efficacy of medical marijuana in alleviating the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by service members and veterans?

I would support any scientifically rigorous, lawful research efforts that have the potential to help improve the lives of patients who have been adversely affected by post-traumatic stress disorder.

Mobilization and Demobilization of National Guard and Reserves - RA

Over the past 10 years, the National Guard and Reserves have experienced their largest and most sustained employment since World War II. Numerous problems arose in the planning and procedures for mobilization and demobilization, e.g., inadequate health screening and medical readiness, monitoring, antiquated pay systems, limited transition assistance programs upon demobilization, and lack of access to members of the Individual Ready Reserve. Reserve force management policies and systems have been characterized in the past as “inefficient and rigid” and readiness levels have been adversely affected by equipment stay-behind, cross-leveling, and reset policies.

What is your assessment of advances made in improving reserve component mobilization and demobilization procedures, and in what areas do problems still exist?

It is my understanding the Department has focused on increasing the alert and notification times prior to mobilization; the Department needs to ensure it provides predictability to Service members, their families, and employers. If confirmed, I would continue the efforts of the Department to monitor this issue closely, as we know that predictability is a major factor for all those affected. I believe strongly that National Guard and Reserve personnel deserve first-class mobilization and demobilization procedures, health screening, and transition assistance programs.

What do you consider to be the most significant enduring changes to the administration of the reserve components aimed at ensuring their readiness for future mobilization requirements?

It is my understanding the most significant enduring changes are in the implementation of service force generation plans, which have been created to provide a defined cycle to prepare Reserve Component units for employment as an operational force. This enables units to train for a mission prior to mobilization and deploy and redeploy on a predictable timeline. I believe there is still work to be done in projecting force requirements by Combatant Commands to avoid mission and personnel requirement changes just prior to mobilization.

Do you see a need to modify current statutory authorities for the mobilization of members of the National Guard and Reserves?

If confirmed, I would review existing authorities, to include those just enacted but not yet implemented, to ensure the Department has appropriate authorities in light of the role of the Guard and Reserves in our force deployment plans. I know the Department appreciates the authorities and support this committee has provided.

Enhanced Reserve Mobilization Authorities

In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, Congress authorized the Service Secretaries to mobilize units and individuals in support of pre-planned combatant command missions for up to 365 consecutive days. In the new defense strategy announced in January, the President and Secretary of Defense have stated that while conventional ground forces will be reduced, special forces will be increased over the next five years, and a key component of the new strategy seems to be the establishment of a rotational presence in Europe, the Middle East, and anywhere US interests are threatened. Some in the press have called this a “lily pad” approach, and it potentially dovetails with an operational view of the Reserve components.

What is your assessment of the operational Reserve and how it will fit into this new paradigm of smaller, more lethal forces rotating into and out of many locations of strategic interest?

I believe we currently have the best trained and equipped Reserve Component in history. The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines of today’s Reserve force are highly educated, enthusiastic, and a great many have either volunteered to serve or continued serving since the outbreak of war in Afghanistan and Iraq. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Services to ensure the Department preserves this hard earned experience, and enables the Reserve Component to perform missions in strategic locations in support of national objectives.

What is your understanding of the appropriate size and makeup of the reserve components in light of the new defense strategy?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Services to ensure we have sized all elements of the Total Force – Active, Reserve, National Guard and Civilian – appropriately to accomplish the new defense strategy in the most efficient manner. In order for the Department to meet the demands of the National Security and Defense Strategy, as well as meet the constraints of reduced budgets, we will need to ensure the optimal use of our Total Force.

I believe the Reserve Component will continue to play an instrumental role in maintaining the superiority of our nation’s forces as part of their Service’s force generation models and with appropriate funding.

Medical and Dental Readiness of the Reserves

Medical and dental readiness of reserve component personnel remains an issue of significant concern to the Committee, and shortfalls that have been identified have indicated a need for improved policy oversight and accountability.

If confirmed, how would you seek to clarify and coordinate reporting on the medical and dental readiness of the reserves?

If confirmed, I will continue to support the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs' efforts to streamline and standardize medical readiness screening and reporting. Every effort should be made to improve efficiencies for cost containment. I concur that an electronic solution that integrates the Reserve communities with the active allowing for standardized reporting would improve immediate information access and provide much needed efficiency.

How would you improve upon the Department's ability to produce a healthy and fit reserve component?

It is my understanding that there is an impressive team of Preventive Health clinical experts who are crafting a multi-discipline, multi-community approach for the Department in collaboration with the National Prevention Strategy of the Office of the Surgeon General. The Department's effort addresses many of the core national preventive health issues identified by the Department of Health and Human Services. The Department's participation on these working groups aligns with the national strategy to address our military community including the military families and civilian workforce that supports the DoD. If confirmed, I would support these efforts.

Military Quality of Life

The Committee is concerned about the sustainment of key quality of life programs for military families, such as family support, child care, education, employment support, health care, morale, welfare and recreation services, especially as DOD's budget declines.

How do you perceive the relationship between military recruitment and retention and quality of life improvements and your own top priorities for the armed forces?

I believe quality of life efforts impact the recruitment and retention of military personnel and are key to maintaining the all-volunteer-force. A Service member's satisfaction with various aspects of military life as well as the Service member's family experience influences members' decision to remain in service. In his testimony before this committee, Secretary Panetta said, "One of the guiding principles in our decision-making process was to keep faith with them and their families. So we're protecting family assistance programs, we're protecting basic benefits, we're sustaining important investments in the budget to try to assist our troops with their needs and the needs of their families." If confirmed, I would review how effectively our programs meet the needs of Service members and their families, and ensure that they are contributing positively to recruitment and retention.

If confirmed, what further enhancements to military quality of life would you consider a priority, and how do you envision working with the Services, combatant commanders, family advocacy groups, and Congress to achieve them?

If confirmed, I would aggressively pursue the Department's priorities to promote the well-being and resilience of Service members and their families. I would focus on understanding the needs of our force and their families and try to expand assistance such as access to counseling, fitness opportunities, and childcare support to help minimize stress on the force. The Department leadership should work together with advocacy groups and Congress to efficiently close gaps and reduce overlaps in programs and to communicate effectively to ensure that families know how to access available support when they need it.

Family Support

Military members and their families in both the active and reserve components have made, and continue to make, tremendous sacrifices in support of operational deployments. Senior military leaders have warned of growing concerns among military families as a result of the stress of frequent deployments and the long separations that go with them.

What do you consider to be the most important family readiness issues for service members and their families, and, if confirmed, how would you ensure that family readiness needs are addressed and adequately resourced?

In his testimony before this committee, Secretary Panetta said, "One of the guiding principles in our decision-making process was that we must try to keep faith with our troops and their families. For that reason, we've determined to protect family assistance programs, to sustain these important investments in this budget that serve our troops and their families and continue to make efforts to ensure that these programs are responsive to their needs."

If confirmed, I would make family readiness issues a priority. I would work with the Secretary and the Military Services to support, prioritize, and appropriately resource quality physical and mental healthcare, spouse career assistance, childcare, other elements of dependent support, and education needs.

How would you address these family readiness needs in light of global rebasing, BRAC, deployments, and anticipated reductions in end strength?

If confirmed, I would continue the Department's current approach to identify and address family readiness needs, to gather information from the Services, commands, Service members and families, professional organizations, and researchers about how to best prepare families for rebasing, BRAC, deployments and other stressful aspects of military life.

If confirmed, how would you ensure support is provided to reserve component families related to mobilization, deployment and family readiness, as well as to active duty families who do not reside near a military installation? - RA

If confirmed, I would ensure the Department's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is properly focused and funded to address the issues faced by reservists, geographically dispersed active duty, their families and immediate support network. The program's proactive and preventive scope provides information, access, referrals, and outreach to military members and those who support them thanks to the Congress for continued support. Further efforts must be underwritten by a coordinated, community-based network of care encompassing the Department, VA, State, local, and private providers.

If confirmed, what additional steps will you take to enhance family support?

If confirmed, I would encourage the implementation of flexible family support programs that meet the needs of our Service members and their families, whether they live on, near, or far from military installations.

Access to Health Care

One of the major concerns for military family members is access to health care. Military spouses tell us that the health care system is inundated, and those stationed in more remote areas may not have access to adequate care.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to ensure complete access to health care for the families of service members?

I agree that access to care for family members is an important concern and, if confirmed, I will work to ensure appropriate access to care is a key feature of our TRICARE program and will continually explore ways to ensure all beneficiaries are provided the appropriate level of care within the established TRICARE Access to Care Standards.

Department of Defense Schools in CONUS

Some have questioned the continuing need for DOD-operated schools for military dependent children within the Continental United States.

In light of the Administration's request for additional Base Realignment and Closure authorities and fiscal constraints, should DOD should establish or update its criteria for the continued operation of DOD schools within CONUS?

No, at this time I don't believe the criteria require change. The law provides the Secretary of Defense the authority to determine whether to establish DoD Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS) (Section 2164 of title 10, United States Code). In exercising that discretion, the Secretary must consider the criteria established

by law and any other criteria the Secretary deems relevant in making such a determination. The final decision about the establishment of a DoD Domestic school rests with the Secretary.

In these times of fiscal pressures and significant high stress periods for our military families, I believe the Department should continue to weigh the cost and benefits associated with operating some or all of the DoD Domestic Schools. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the committee on this important issue.

If so, and if confirmed, how would you approach this task?

While I do not believe the criteria should be updated, if confirmed, I will review all Department of Defense schools programs and ensure we provide as much stability as possible to military dependent children.

Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs

In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, Congress required the establishment of an Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. The purpose of this office is to enhance and improve Department of Defense support for military families with special needs, whether educational or medical in nature.

In your view, what should be the priorities of this Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs?

If confirmed, services for military families with special needs will be a priority for me. I believe the priorities of this office include medical and educational programs to strengthen military families with special needs. I would support the critical efforts of this office to establish consistent policy and monitor its implementation across the Services. I would identify programs already in existence that can provide special services to military families. An example I am familiar with from the Air Force is the EFMP Coordinating Committees. These organizations operate within the Air Force's Community Action Information Boards and address community based solutions to any gaps in services for special needs families.

If confirmed, how would you ensure outreach to those military families with special needs dependents so they are able to get the support they need?

If confirmed, I would ensure increased communication efforts to reach families with special needs through the use of Webinars, social media outlets, base newspapers, commissaries and exchanges, childcare centers and youth facilities, Department schools and a variety of Department and services websites. In addition, I would emphasize

collaboration with civilian community resources outside the gate to enhance the resources that the Services provide. Public school systems, early intervention programs and non-profit organizations such as Easter Seals and the March of Dimes provide invaluable, distinctive resources that are not offered by the Services.

Voluntary Education Programs

The Department established the MyCAA program, a demonstration project that provides military spouses with funds through “career advancement accounts” to help enable them to pursue portable careers. In February 2010, the Department became overwhelmed by the number of program applicants, subsequently ran out of funds, and then temporarily halted the program. The program has now re-started, but the funds, as well as the number of spouses who would be eligible for the program, will be more limited.

What is your understanding of the current focus and objectives of the program?

It is my understanding that the Department continues to support MyCAA, but has shaped the program to target the spouses of those members most in need of additional assistance. From my understanding, as part of the larger, holistic Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program, the MyCAA program now offers spouses of E1-E5, O1-O2, and W1-W2 Service members the opportunity of up to \$4,000 for education, a license, or a credential necessary for employment in a portable career. The objective of the MyCAA program is to ensure that these mostly younger military spouses have opportunities to pursue and sustain a career while supporting their Service members. Through the SECO program, spouses can obtain professional education and career counseling that includes interest, aptitude, and skill testing, information on education and licenses and projected career field growth and salary levels required in specific occupations.

If confirmed, what would be your objectives for the MyCAA program and other spouse employment initiatives or programs?

If confirmed my objective would be to assist, support, and empower military spouses in making informed decisions by offering an opportunity to obtain comprehensive information on high-growth, high-demand, portable occupations. This should include occupational information on education, license and credential requirements, how to access other Federal, state and private opportunities for financial assistance in achieving these requirements, as well as understanding earnings potential. It should also include the recent initiative by the First Lady and Dr. Biden to encourage states to accept licenses from other states for the spouses of Service members. If confirmed, I would also promote the outstanding pipeline of talent that military spouses represent to America’s employers. Military spouses are talented, diverse, and motivated.

The Department continues to seek ways to improve oversight of its tuition assistance programs, including standardizing eligibility criteria among the Services and requiring all schools who accept tuition assistance funding, whether for online courses or on-post, to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department which will, among other things, subject online schools to Departmental audits. We have heard concerns from some in the academic community that certain provisions of the MOU infringe on institutions' academic freedom.

What is the status of the MOU, and what will happen to service members enrolled in schools that refuse to sign?

It is my understanding the MOU, originally to be effective January 1, 2012, was extended until March 30, 2012, at the request of Congress. I also understand the DoD is collaborating with institutions of higher learning to reach a resolution and will shortly have an updated MOU for signature. Approximately 95 percent of current students who use Tuition Assistance are enrolled in institutions which have signed the MOU. It is my understanding that if Service members are enrolled at an institution which will still not sign the revised MOU, the Services will assist them to find schools that have the same program and will transfer credits already earned. The Services will also provide counseling to assist in identifying additional or alternative sources of funding if the Service member wishes to remain enrolled in that school.

What is your assessment of the tuition assistance program in light of the needs of the Services and the current budget environment?

It is my understanding, despite budget reductions, the Department remains committed to providing Service members with support programs and resources that empower them to address the challenges of military life and prepare them for success when they return to civilian life.

What is your view the Post-9/11 GI Bill as a viable and fair alternative for service members and spouses if the military tuition assistance and MyCAA benefits are eliminated or reduced? – w/ MPP assistance

Congress provided a significant benefit with the passage for the Post 9-11 GI Bill. I do not believe the Post-9/11 GI Bill is a viable alternative to Tuition Assistance or MyCAA because it is designed for different purposes. Although currently serving members can use the Post-9/11 GI Bill, it is better designed to provide financial support for education and housing so prior Service members can attend school in a full (or near full) time capacity. The Tuition Assistance program is designed to assist current Service members in obtaining *off duty* education to gain the knowledge and skill they need for their military careers and prepare for success when they return to civilian life.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits are not available for transfer to a spouse until after six years of service. Therefore, the majority of the MyCAA spouses would not be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill transfer. The MyCAA program is designated to serve spouses of junior Service members.

What is your view of proposed changes to the so-called 90/10 rule that would require academic institutions to derive no more than 85 percent of their revenue from federal sources, including DoD tuition assistance and VA GI Bill funding?

If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about this issue. It is my understanding that the Department does not currently have an objection, as long as the legislation allows for a two-year period for a school to return to compliance.

Medical Research Programs

What do you see as the highest priority medical research investment areas for the Department of Defense?

I agree with the Department's current research priorities to improve the diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of wounded warriors with emphasis on Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), the psychological health and well-being of military personnel and their families including Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and suicide prevention, pain management, eye and other sensory system trauma, far forward hemorrhage control and resuscitation, and improved prosthetics.

How will you assess the amount of investment made in these research areas to determine if they are sufficient to meet DOD goals and requirements?

If confirmed, I would review the current research portfolio to ensure it prioritizes and resources research appropriate to the requirements of the Department.

How will you ensure that DOD medical research efforts are well coordinated with similar research programs within the private sector, academia, the Services, DARPA, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the National Institutes of Health?

If confirmed, I would support coordination efforts to ensure research is conducted jointly, building on, and partnering with industry, academia, and other government agencies to ensure the greatest benefit to our Service members. I am aware that joint program reviews of medical research are conducted with DoD, VA, and NIH scientists to ensure our research reflects the best interests of our Service members and leverages the federal medical research investment.

How will you ensure that new medical technologies (including drugs and vaccines) are independently and adequately tested before their use by DOD organizations and personnel?

If confirmed, I will work through the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs to ensure the Department continues to apply the highest standards of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ensure new medical technologies, drugs, and vaccines are safe and effective before they are adopted for use in the Department.

There have been growing privacy and security concerns raised about the use of online social networks for medical research purposes.

How will you ensure that the increasing use of social networking media for medical research purposes will protect the privacy and security of patients?

If confirmed, I would enforce the Department's policy, which states that the rights and welfare of human subjects in research supported or conducted by Department components will be protected. This protection is based on the ethical principle of respect for persons and encompasses requirements to obtain informed consent and to do no harm. In application of this policy, I would support the Department's adherence to the applicable statutory provisions for human protections in research.

What are your biggest concerns related to the DOD medical research enterprise?

Although I do not have detailed knowledge of the entire research portfolio, I am especially interested in the responsiveness of the research program to medical readiness and our Service members' medical needs. We must assure the Department has a balanced investment in medical science and technology and in medical advanced development leading to timely translation into clinical practice in the Military Health System. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the medical research enterprise.

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs are critical to enhancement of military life for members and their families, especially in light of frequent and lengthy deployments. These programs must be relevant and attractive to all eligible users, including active duty and reserve personnel and retirees.

What challenges do you foresee in sustaining MWR programs (particularly in view of the Secretary's efficiency initiative) and, if confirmed, what improvements would you seek to achieve?

It is my understanding the benefits of strong MWR programs are critical to esprit de corps, stress reduction, and personal health and well-being. Although there are very extensive installation MWR facilities and programs, I believe there is an immediate challenge in ensuring that MWR programs for our deployed forces meet their needs, especially free access to the Internet to communicate with family and friends back home and fitness and recreation activities to keep forces fit to fight. Recreation support for our wounded warriors is also critical. In the longer term, I believe the Department needs to understand what programs are valued by Service members and their families in order to make wise investments. In addition, the MWR customers need to be involved in expressing their needs and satisfaction with our programs and policies.

Commissary and Military Exchange Systems

Commissary and military exchange systems are significant quality of life components for members of the active and reserve forces and their families.

What is your view of the need for modernization of business policies and practices in the commissary and exchange systems, and what do you view as the most promising avenues for change to achieve modernization goals?

I understand that commissary and exchange programs and policies must continue to evolve to meet the needs and expectations of our changing force and a changing marketplace. If confirmed, I will work to become more familiar with the challenges in this area and look forward to working with the committee on these issues.

What is your view of the proposals by some to consolidate or eliminate Commissaries and Exchanges in certain areas where they are underused or duplicative of services readily available at reasonable cost in the community?

If confirmed, I would review any proposals aimed at reducing overhead, which may include closing underutilized locations or eliminating duplicative services. I recognize that commissary and exchange programs are an important element of the Service members' compensation package and contribute to the quality of life of military personnel and their families, including our retired members. Moving forward, I believe we need to ensure the commissaries and exchanges provide the necessary support for today's total military force, while economizing operations. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the committee on these issues.

In the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005, Congress required the Secretary of Defense to establish an executive governing body for the commissary and exchange systems to ensure the complementary operation of the two systems.

What is your understanding of the purpose and composition of the executive governing body?

I am aware the Department established the DoD Executive Resale Board as the governing body to provide advice to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness regarding the complementary operation of the commissary and exchange systems. I have been informed that the Board works to resolve issues and has been instrumental in pursuing matters of mutual benefit to the elements of the military resale system. The Board is chaired by the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness, and members include both the senior military officers and civilians who oversee and manage the commissary and exchanges systems.

If confirmed, what would your role be with respect to the governing body, and what would your expectations be for its role?

If confirmed, I would ensure the Board would continue to meet regularly to review operational areas of mutual interest to the commissary and exchange systems.

Civilian Personnel Systems

Section 1113 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 provides DOD with extensive personnel flexibilities for its civilian employees that are not available to other agencies. In particular, section 9902(a) of title 5, U.S. Code, as added by section 1113, directs the Department to establish a new performance management system for all of its employees. Section 9902(b) directs the Department to develop a streamlined new hiring system that is designed to better fulfill DOD's mission needs, produce high-quality applicants, and support timely personnel decisions.

What is your understanding of the current status of the Department's efforts to implement the authority provided by section 1113?

I understand the Department and labor organizations that represent the Department's employees have worked collaboratively over 18 months to design a performance management system and improved hiring processes. The Department launched its "New Beginnings" pre-decisional process effort in September 2010, which has culminated in a comprehensive report from three design teams—performance management, hiring flexibilities, and civilian workforce incentive fund—containing over 100 pre-decisional proposals for Department leadership consideration. If confirmed, I will support the work I understand is underway to comply with the NDAA.

Do you agree that DOD's civilian employee workforce plays a vital role in the functioning of the Department?

Yes, the Department's civilian employee workforce plays an instrumental role in the functioning of the Department as part of the Total Force across a range of missions.

What is your view of the personnel flexibilities provided by section 1113?

I understand Congress provided these flexibilities to allow the Department to better meet mission requirements by establishing a new performance management system, redesigned hiring procedures, and a civilian workforce incentive fund. I believe the Department's goal is to establish a fair, credible, and transparent performance management system with a continued focus on aligning Departmental and organizational goals with individual job objectives. The Department is also committed to on-going hiring reform initiatives and efforts to streamline the hiring process. If confirmed, I will support the work that I understand is under way to develop these flexibilities.

If confirmed, will you make it a priority to implement these flexibilities in a manner that best meets the needs of the Department and promotes the quality of the Department's civilian workforce?

Yes, if confirmed, I would make it my priority to implement those flexibilities that would facilitate accomplishing the Department's missions. The Department has found great value in the pre-decisional process involving union and non-union employees. My understanding is that design team recommendations will be deliberated to fully assess functionality, costs, potential benefits, and legal viability, and will continue to involve employees through their labor representatives as the Department moves forward on particular recommendations and decisions about the performance management and hiring processes.

Section 1112 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 directs the Department to develop a Defense Civilian Leadership Program (DCLP) to recruit, train, and advance a new generation of civilian leaders for the Department. Section 1112 provides the Department with the full range of authorities available for demonstration programs under section 4703 of title 5, U.S. Code, including the authority to compensate participants on the basis of qualifications, performance, and market conditions. These flexibilities are not otherwise available to the Department of Defense.

What is your understanding of the current status of the Department's efforts to implement the authority provided by section 1112?

I understand that the Department has designed a new leadership program and has implemented the first pilot. If confirmed, I will fully engage to ensure the new program meets the intent of the NDAA authority.

Do you agree that the Department needs to recruit highly qualified civilian personnel to meet the growing needs of its acquisition, technical, business, and financial communities?

Yes. I completely agree that recruiting highly qualified civilian personnel both in mission critical occupations, such as acquisition and finance, and in leadership positions across the Department is essential to mission success.

In your view, has the existing civilian hiring process been successful in recruiting such personnel and meeting these needs?

Although I believe the Department currently has a highly talented workforce, I wholeheartedly support the initiatives to streamline and reform the civilian hiring process. While I understand the Department is making progress, there is still work to be done in this area. If confirmed, I would ensure the Department actively engages in

civilian hiring reform initiatives and aggressively pursues continued improvements, in consultation with Congress.

If confirmed, will you make it a priority to implement the authority provided by section 1112 in a manner that best meets the needs of the Department and promotes the quality of the Department's civilian workforce?

Yes, if confirmed I will make it a priority to implement the authority provided by section 1112. The Department recognizes the need for an improved leader development model to attract, retain, and develop civilian leaders to support pipeline readiness and enhance bench strength. If confirmed, I will assess the outcomes of pilot programs designed in support of section 1112 to ensure final implementation of a model necessary to provide the next generation of innovative leaders with the technical competence to meet the future leadership needs of the Department.

Human Capital Planning

Section 115b of title 10, United States Code, as added by section 1108 of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2010, requires the Secretary of Defense to develop and update in every even-numbered year a strategic human capital plan that specifically identifies gaps in the Department's civilian workforce and strategies for addressing those gaps. Section 115b requires that the plan include chapters specifically addressing the Department's senior management, functional, and technical workforce and the Department's acquisition workforce.

Would you agree that a strategic human capital plan that identifies gaps in the workforce and strategies for addressing those gaps is a key step toward ensuring that the Department has the skills and capabilities needed to meet future challenges?

Yes. I believe such planning well positions the Department to acquire, develop, and maintain the workforce it needs to meet current and future mission challenges.

Do you see the need for any changes in the requirements for a strategic human capital plan under section 115b?

At this time, I have no recommendations. If confirmed, I would review the strategic workforce planning that the Department has conducted over the past years against the section 115b requirements, as well as the current workforce planning approach, to determine if any changes may be needed to improve the Department's overall workforce planning effort. I look forward to working with the committee to this end.

If confirmed, will you ensure that the Department of Defense fully complies with these requirements?

Yes, if confirmed, I would ensure the Department has a robust strategic workforce plan in place as required by 115b.

Since the time that the Department's most recent strategic human capital plan was issued, its civilian workforce plans have been significantly altered by the changed budget environment and extensive efficiencies initiatives.

What role do you believe human capital planning should play in determining where reductions in the civilian workforce can be taken with the lowest level of risk?

I believe that workforce plans should serve as a guide, including specific strategies, for closing high-risk skill gaps. The strategic workforce planning process can be a practical and crucial tool for guiding workforce decisions necessitated by changing strategies, budget constraints, and to prevent excessive or irreversible reductions in any particular capability or competency. If confirmed, I will monitor the strategic workforce planning process to ensure comprehensive and sufficient plans are available to inform civilian workforce reduction decisions.

Would you agree that the strategic human capital plan required by section 115b should be updated to more accurately reflect the Department's current workforce plans and requirements?

Yes. If confirmed, I would ensure the Department's biennial strategic workforce plans under section 115b would be based on the latest assessment of the Department's current workforce skills, based on existing and future workload and requirements. Forecasts for the Department's workforce must be based on validated mission requirements and workload, both current and projected.

What steps if any will you take, if confirmed, to ensure that civilian workforce levels are determined on the basis of careful planning and long-term requirements, rather than by arbitrary goals or targets?

If confirmed, I would expect Department decisions on workforce shaping to align to the Department's long term strategic workforce plan, with the understanding that short-term exceptions may be needed due to emerging dynamics in the budget environment. Forecasts for the Department's workforce must be based on validated mission requirements and workload, both current and projected, and these forecasts should inform any reductions in the civilian workforce.

Balance Between Civilian Employees and Contractor Employees

In recent years, the Department of Defense has become increasingly reliant on services provided by contractors. As a result of the explosive growth in service contracts,

contractors now play an integral role in the performance of functions that were once performed exclusively by government employees, including the management and oversight of weapons programs, the development of policies, the development of public relations strategies, and even the collection and analysis of intelligence. In many cases, contractor employees work in the same offices, serve on the same projects and task forces, and perform many of the same functions as federal employees.

Do you believe that the current balance between civilian employees and contractor employees is in the best interests of the Department of Defense?

The Department's "sourcing" of functions and work among military, civilian, and contracted services must be consistent with workload requirements, funding availability, readiness and management needs, as well as applicable laws and statute. I believe the current workforce mix reflects the Department's current best judgment today on how to balance operational needs and fiscal reality. I am committed to ensuring the Department meets its statutory obligations to annually review missions, functions, and workforce composition, including reliance on contracted services, and to ensure the workforce is appropriately balanced and aligned to our most critical priorities.

I value the support provided by private sector firms and recognize contracted services are, and will continue to be, a vital source of expertise, innovation, and support to the Department. However, I believe we must be vigilant against excessive or inappropriate reliance on contract support. This includes ensuring we maintain adequate control and oversight of our missions and operations, as well as growing critical capabilities internally.

What steps if any will you take, if confirmed, to ensure that the Department of Defense is not excessively reliant on contractors to perform its basic functions?

If confirmed, I would execute my Title 10 responsibilities regarding reviews of contracted services and in-sourcing. Where appropriate, I support in-sourcing as one tool by which to reduce reliance on contracted services; ensure inherently government, closely associated, or critical work is performed by government civilians or military; maintain management control and oversight of key functions and workload in support of our warfighter; and deliver services in the most cost efficient manner possible.

Section 2330a of title 10, United States Code, requires the Department of Defense to maintain an inventory of contract services. Section 321 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 amended this provision to give the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness a key role in implementing this provision.

What is your understanding of the current status of the Department's efforts to implement the requirements of section 2330a?

I understand the Department submitted a plan to the Congressional Defense Committees in November 2011 that delineated both short- and long-term steps to become fully compliant with the statutory requirements. If confirmed, I will ensure the necessary steps are taken to enable the Department to fully move forward with the implementation of the requirements of 2330a.

What additional steps if any will you take, if confirmed, to ensure that the Department fully implements the requirements of section 2330a?

If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and will fully support efforts delineated in the November 2011, plan currently underway across the Department to increase visibility and accountability of contracted services.

Department of Defense Efficiency Initiatives

In May of 2010, then-Secretary Gates launched an initiative to strengthen and modernize our fighting forces by eliminating inefficient or duplicative programs. In an August 16, 2010 memo to DoD components, the Secretary directed twenty specific initiatives, many involving military and civilian personnel and DoD contractors. Secretary Panetta has included similar efficiency initiatives in the Department's budget for Fiscal Year 2013.

What is your assessment of the impact that the implementation of these initiatives has had, to date, on the military and civilian workforces of the Department of Defense?

Secretary Panetta has continued Secretary Gates' initiative to ensure the Department executes its defense strategy with the most effective use of each defense dollar. This continues the efforts to seek efficiencies throughout the Department's business operations. The FY 2012 initiatives are only now being implemented. In the oversight process, all components are called upon to identify any potential unintended consequences to overall mission capabilities and unit readiness. My understanding is that this oversight will include looking for any impacts to the military and civilian workforce and ensuring adjustments to this workforce are linked to mission needs.

Do you believe that any adjustments or modifications are needed in the implementation of these initiatives to avoid adverse impacts on the military or civilian workforces of the Department?

If confirmed, I will be committed to minimizing the potential adverse impact on our dedicated uniformed and civil service workforces. I would support efforts to more appropriately size our workforce to meet our most pressing and critical priorities while ensuring well-reasoned reductions based on workload requirements, risk factors, and

fiscal realities. If confirmed, I will look carefully for any adverse impacts and make recommendations for adjustments that may be necessary.

What additional efficiencies if any, do you believe the Department should undertake with regard to its military and civilian workforces?

I believe the revised strategy of the Department, as well as the need for increased fiscal constraint, demands constant assessments of the Department's Total Force. If confirmed, I will fully support ongoing Department efforts to identify additional efficiencies through program and mission prioritization while preserving the viability, capabilities, and competencies of our military and civilian workforces. However, identifying specific workforce efficiencies beyond those in the Department's FY 2013 budget request would be premature.

Acquisition Workforce

Section 852 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 established an Acquisition Workforce Development Fund to help the Department of Defense address shortcomings in its acquisition workforce. The fund provides a continuing source of funds for this purpose.

Do you believe that the DOD acquisition workforce development fund is still needed to ensure that DOD has the right number of employees with the right skills to run its acquisition programs in the most cost effective manner for the taxpayers?

Yes. I believe the fund is essential to continuing efforts to strengthen the acquisition workforce.

If confirmed, what steps if any will you take to ensure that the money made available through the workforce development fund is spent in a manner that best meets the needs of the Department of Defense and its acquisition workforce?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics and the Department components to ensure initiatives supported by the fund are sound, aligned with human capital strategies, and address highest priority workforce capability and capacity needs.

Section 872 of the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 codifies the authority for the Department of Defense to conduct an acquisition workforce demonstration project and extends the authority to 2017.

Do you believe it would be in the best interest of the Department to extend and expand the acquisition workforce demonstration project?

I believe as we continue efforts to strengthen the acquisition workforce capability, it is critical we review and use all authorities and tools available. I believe it is in the best interests of the Department to expand on a thoughtful, deliberate basis while we assess effectiveness. The Department is authorized by law up to 120,000 employee participants covered under acquisition demonstration projects. It is my understanding that today the Department has 15,300 employees, the majority of which returned to the demonstration project following the repeal of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) as directed by the NDAA for FY 2010. With that now complete, several acquisition organizations across all components have expressed interest in participating in the project. Project participation is voluntary and based on meeting acquisition related workforce demographic eligibility criteria. If confirmed, I will work with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics to ensure leaders are oriented to the design and see the value of participation before they socialize, train and prepare their organizations.

What steps would you take, if confirmed, to implement section 872?

If confirmed, I will work closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics and the Department components to ensure the Department is effectively positioned to expand the Acquisition Demonstration project as necessary.

Laboratory Personnel Demonstration Program

The laboratory demonstration program founded in section 342 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1995 as amended by section 1114 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001, section 1107 of the National Defense Authorization act for Fiscal Year 2008, section 1108 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, and section 1105 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, paved the way for personnel management initiatives and new flexibilities at the defense laboratories. These innovations have been adopted in various forms throughout other DOD personnel systems.

If confirmed, will you fully implement the laboratory demonstration program and the authorities under these provisions?

Yes, if confirmed I will work to fully implement the laboratory demonstration program.

If confirmed, will you ensure that the directors of the defense laboratories are provided the full range of personnel flexibilities and authorities provided by Congress?

Yes, if confirmed, I will work with the directors of the defense laboratories to provide the full range of personnel flexibilities.

DOD Scientific and Technical Personnel

Recently, the Department issued guidance, as part of its efficiencies initiatives, to centralize certain hiring authorities, including for Highly Qualified Experts (HQE) and Inter-Governmental Personnel Assignment (IPA) positions. Both are heavily used by the Department's scientific and technical (S&T) enterprise, including the DOD's laboratories and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). The benefit of these authorities is to use them to make rapid hiring decisions for individuals in a highly competitive national S&T jobs market. However, there is concern that the centralization of the process will actually slow down the Services' and defense agencies' ability to hire rapidly.

What will you do to ensure that these special hiring authorities are not negatively impacted in terms of allowing DOD to rapidly hire these types of highly specialized individuals?

If confirmed, I would ensure the Department actively engages in initiatives to streamline and reform the civilian hiring system, to include efforts to ensure that the Department's processes for using special hiring authorities are efficient in fulfilling mission needs.

Under the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program, the Department is able to expedite U.S. citizenship for foreign nationals that enlist in the military and have either specialized medical or linguistic skills.

How could this program be extended to include, subject to appropriate security reviews, highly skilled scientific and technical foreign nationals – e.g., graduates of U.S. universities with doctorates in fields the DOD has a demand for and where less than half of these graduates are U.S. citizens?

It is my understanding that 1,000 personnel were recruited under MAVNI in 2009, as a one-year pilot. I understand the Department is completing a two-year extension of the MAVNI pilot program with a restart by summer 2012 for a two-year pilot program. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about this program and assessing what changes may be appropriate. My understanding at this time is that the Department believes the program is appropriately scoped.

Foreign Language Proficiency

A Foreign Language Transformation Roadmap announced by the Department on March 30, 2005, directed a series of actions aimed at transforming the Department's foreign language capabilities, to include revision of policy and doctrine, building a capabilities based requirements process, and enhancing foreign language capability for both military and civilian personnel.

In your view, what should be the priorities of the Federal Government to expanding the foreign language skills of civilian and military personnel and improving coordination of foreign language programs and activities among the Federal agencies?

I believe priorities for the Federal Government for expanding foreign language skills should include: building a globally competent workforce by integrating federal programs to educate a larger pool of U.S. citizens beginning in pre-school and continuing through their educational journey in high school and college; expanding select learning opportunities such as The Language Flagship Program that builds a pool of highly skilled language professionals from which all Federal Government agencies can recruit; and partnering with academia, interagency and international partners to expand and strengthen the pipeline for the Federal Government's workforce in critical foreign languages.

I believe we can improve coordination among Federal agencies by utilizing existing organizations such as the National Security Education Board.

What changes, if any, would you recommend for the current set of DOD language proficiency programs?

I believe our goal is to increase the proficiency level of personnel with languages that are most critical to our mission, as well as to establish viable career paths for individuals with needed language, regional, and cultural skills. If confirmed, I would continue to support the Department's vision and on-going efforts to systematically identify and build language proficiency in a comprehensive, collaborative, and holistic manner. Recognizing that the Department cannot do this alone, if confirmed, I will focus on both internal and external partnerships to build and institutionalize these vital skills in our nation.

GI Bill Benefits

Congress passed the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act in 2008 ("Post-9/11 GI Bill) that created enhanced educational benefits for service members who have served at least 90 days on active duty since 9/11. The maximum benefit would roughly cover the cost of a college education at any public university in the country.

What unresolved issues related to implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill (e.g., coverage of additional military personnel) do you consider most important to be addressed?

It is my understanding the Department has not identified any additional unresolved issues. I believe the provisions of the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Improvement

Act corrected any major issues in the original statute that had the greatest impact on the Department.

What is your assessment of the impact of the Post-9/11 GI Bill on recruiting and retention, including the provision of transferability for continued service?

I believe it is too early to empirically determine the impact of the Post-9/11 GI Bill on either recruiting or retention, though anecdotally it appears to have positive effects.

Congressional Oversight

Field Code Changed

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?

If confirmed, I look forward to appearing before this Committee and other appropriate committees in support of our nation's Service members.

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 Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness?

If confirmed, I will appear before this Committee, or designated members of this Committee, and provide information in support of our nation's Service members.

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?

If confirmed, I will ensure that testimony, briefings, and other communications of information are provided to this Committee and its staff and other appropriate Committees.

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?

If confirmed, I 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.