

SELECT COMMITTEE ON  
INTELLIGENCE

UNITED STATES SENATE



**Prehearing Questions  
for  
Christine S. Abizaid  
upon her nomination to be the Director of the  
National Counterterrorism Center**

## ***Responsibilities of the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center***

**QUESTION 1:** What is your understanding of the unique role of NCTC within the Intelligence Community (IC)?

**ANSWER:** The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) is critical to the U.S. Government's (USG) ability to counter terrorism. My understanding of the unique role of the Center within the Intelligence Community (IC) draws directly from the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA) and aligns with the understanding of past Directors. The IRTPA is NCTC's authorizing statute and outlines the Center's mission and role within the IC. Among its provisions, this law directs NCTC to:

- Serve as the primary organization in the USG for analyzing and integrating all intelligence possessed or acquired by the USG pertaining to terrorism and counterterrorism (CT), excepting intelligence pertaining exclusively to domestic terrorists and domestic CT.
- Conduct strategic operational planning for CT activities, integrating all instruments of national power, including diplomatic, financial, military, intelligence, homeland security, and law enforcement activities within and among agencies.
- Ensure agencies have appropriate access to and receive all-source intelligence support needed to execute their CT plans or perform independent, alternative analysis.
- Serve as the central and shared knowledge bank on known and suspected terrorists (KSTs) and international terror groups, as well as their goals, strategies, capabilities, and networks of contacts and support.

Accordingly, NCTC's role within the IC flows from its ability to access and integrate CT intelligence. NCTC is the single federal component that has access to all terrorism information collected by the USG, both domestically and abroad, which it harnesses to fulfill its missions, including the conduct of all-source analysis and maintenance of the classified database known as the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE), which supports the USG's CT and watchlisting efforts.

**QUESTION 2:** What is your understanding of the specific statutory

responsibilities of the NCTC Director?

**ANSWER:** My understanding of the Director's role under the statute is consistent with the understanding of past Directors. The IRTPA requires the Director to report to the President when exercising the Center's whole-of-government strategic operational planning functions and to the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) for all other activities and functions. NCTC's mission, and that of its Director, is to focus on the prevention, detection, and disruption of acts of terrorism directed against the United States and its interests at home and abroad.

The Director of NCTC serves as the principal advisor to the DNI on CT matters. The Director also advises the DNI on the extent to which the CT program recommendations and budget proposals of the departments, agencies, and elements of the USG conform to the priorities established by the President. Further, the Director is responsible for strategic operational planning and providing federal departments and agencies with all-source intelligence support to execute assigned CT activities. In addition to supporting the Executive Branch, NCTC supports the Congress with information and analysis, and—in close partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—provides terrorism information and analysis to state, local, tribal, and territorial partners. NCTC also provides support to the FBI and DHS on domestic terrorism issues when they request assistance and where appropriate.

**QUESTION 3:** Have you discussed with Director of National Intelligence Haines her specific expectations of you, if confirmed as NCTC Director, and her expectations of NCTC as a whole? If so, please describe these expectations.

**ANSWER:** Yes. Director Haines and I have discussed her expectation that, if confirmed as Director of NCTC, I would work to advance NCTC's crucial role in preventing, detecting, and disrupting acts of terrorism against the United States and its interests. She emphasized the importance of NCTC's work as the IC's lead component for integrating and assessing intelligence related to evolving international and transnational terrorist threats, as the coordinator for strategic operational CT planning across all elements of national power, and as the component responsible for maintaining the USG's central and shared database on KSTs and international terror groups. She also stressed the growing importance of the Center's support to the FBI and DHS, consistent with NCTC's legal authorities, as the Government addresses a rise in threats from Domestic Violent Extremists. NCTC has a strong reputation for its consistently sound, thorough, timely, and independent analysis. If confirmed, Director Haines and I will share a

priority on ensuring that reputation is sustained.

### ***NCTC Mission***

*NCTC was designed to serve as the primary organization in the U.S. Government for integrating and analyzing all intelligence pertaining to terrorism and counterterrorism and to conduct strategic operational planning by integrating all instruments of national power.*

**QUESTION 4:** What are NCTC's unique contributions to IC counterterrorism analysis as compared to counterterrorism analysis produced by other IC components like CIA?

**ANSWER:** NCTC is in several ways uniquely important to the United States' efforts to assess and address terrorist threats to the United States and its interests. NCTC's role as the USG's central and shared knowledge bank on KSTs and international terrorist groups provides the Center with the ability to analyze and integrate all sources of intelligence pertaining to terrorism and counterterrorism, collected by agencies with both primarily foreign and primarily domestic areas of responsibility. Additionally, because NCTC does not exercise operational or clandestine intelligence collection capabilities that are otherwise native to several other IC components, it is better able to preserve analytic objectivity in its assessments without an over-reliance on any particular source of intelligence. NCTC is also distinct from other IC components, including the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), because it puts a premium on coordinating its intelligence assessments with partners across the IC. This enables NCTC products to serve as a single voice on CT issues while also reflecting the views of the entire U.S. CT community. Finally, the Director of NCTC has the unique role of performing strategic operational planning for the whole of the U.S. CT community in support of the President through the National Security Council (NSC) Staff.

**QUESTION 5:** More than fifteen years after its establishment, do you believe NCTC is fulfilling its mission as outlined in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA) to serve as the primary organization in the U.S. Government for integrating and analyzing all intelligence pertaining to terrorism and counterterrorism?

**ANSWER:** Over the course of my CT career, I have watched NCTC grow into a recognized leader in the CT community—a leader heavily relied on by national-level policymakers and tactical operators alike—marking significant progress in

fulfilling the vision set forth by the 9/11 Commission and the Congress in 2004. NCTC's established role as the "primary organization" in the USG for analyzing and integrating international and transnational terrorism information, and its corresponding responsibility to ensure that agencies have appropriate all-source intelligence support, are central to the CT enterprise's ability to protect the homeland. While I believe NCTC is fulfilling its mission effectively by leveraging strong partnerships, integrating intelligence, and taking a comprehensive approach to the threat, I also recognize that NCTC must always be ready to adapt to the evolving terrorism challenge. In fulfilling the CT mission, which is complex and comprised of many actors of varying degrees of capabilities and intention, there is always room for innovation, creativity, and greater efficiency and effectiveness. If confirmed as NCTC's Director, I would make it among my chief priorities to ensure the Center remains agile and well-equipped to fulfill its missions.

**QUESTION 6:** What is your assessment of NCTC's current strengths and weaknesses?

**ANSWER:** If confirmed as Director of NCTC, I will assess the Center's strengths and weaknesses on an ongoing basis and work with the DNI, my leadership team, and CT community stakeholders to direct its future course.

I believe NCTC's greatest strength is its people: dedicated public servants who work tirelessly to protect the nation. The NCTC workforce is a cohesive and diverse collection of CT professionals drawn from across the IC and broader interagency. This mix creates a collaborative, inclusive atmosphere where analysts, planners, and other CT professionals can do their best work. If confirmed, I will remain committed to recruiting and growing the next generation of CT talent. In doing so, I will ensure that NCTC continues providing an equitable and safe working environment for all of its employees regardless of their race, gender, origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or other protected status.

Another core NCTC strength is its unique access to terrorism data across a spectrum of sources. NCTC's strong relationship with IC counterparts and its position as the only IC component with access to all foreign and domestically collected terrorism data allows its workforce the ability to provide comprehensive, coordinated, and independent all-source analysis. I would also note, as past Directors have reflected, that because NCTC does not engage in or direct CT operations, it can better maintain a neutral perspective for CT analysis and strategic operational planning for the CT enterprise.

One area in which the government can always do better is to manage and fully synthesize the data to which it has access. This imperative is even more essential for the IC whose mission it is to anticipate and evaluate threats to national security, drawing upon both intelligence collection and open-source information to assess the overall environment. For NCTC, this means that the Center must continue to invest in innovative technology to power more comprehensive data-informed insights, increase the speed of information sharing and collaboration, and, where appropriate, automate workflows.

Finally, I believe that more transparency about the nation's CT efforts, where and when appropriate, will help the country better understand the significant progress made in the United States' CT campaign, especially since 9/11, and the importance of continuing a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to address the persistent and evolving terrorism challenge the United States faces, both at home and abroad. If confirmed, in line with the Principles of Intelligence Transparency for the Intelligence Community, I would gladly commit to providing the American people information about the threat environment, the successes of the CT enterprise, and examples of the remarkable dedication the country's CT professionals display every day.

**QUESTION 7:** What do you believe are the greatest challenges facing NCTC?

**ANSWER:** From my perspective, the greatest challenge facing not only NCTC, but the IC more generally, is maintaining the ability to innovate and adapt as quickly as our adversaries, especially in an era of rapid technological advancement that has lowered barriers to entry for the use of new, powerful, and far-reaching tools. Terrorists, in particular, continue to make technological advances in fields such as encrypted communications and use of social media that make it more difficult to detect threats, discern significant trends, and understand terrorist communications and networks.

Another challenge I expect NCTC will need to address is one of prioritization for limited IC resources. There is a clear recognition that U.S. national security depends on effectively navigating the long-term strategic competition between the United States and China, while simultaneously addressing a myriad of other national security challenges, CT chief among them.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the ODNI and NCTC's leadership team and staff to advance the Center's ability to meet these and other challenges that emerge.

**QUESTION 8:** Please explain your vision for NCTC, including your views on its current and future priorities and what the organization should look like five years from now.

**ANSWER:** I believe that during this time of shifting national security priorities and the likely resultant reprioritization of limited IC resources, the country will need NCTC to sustain its laser-like focus on preventing, detecting and deterring threats to the United States and its interests, even as other USG entities may need to shift resources to address strategic competition with China and Russia. Unlike other USG entities, NCTC is purpose-built to lead the CT community in the critical yet specific mission of protecting the homeland from catastrophic terrorist attacks. If confirmed as its Director, I will work to ensure NCTC has the resources, partnerships, technology, and expertise required for it to deliver for the American people.

NCTC's ability to succeed in its mission correlates directly to its ability to continue recruiting and retaining a talented, diverse workforce. If confirmed, I will continue to focus on recruiting qualified individuals from within the IC, from the private sector, and from academia. I will also ensure the NCTC management team invests time, energy, and intellectual capital in the NCTC workforce, exposing our CT professionals to developmental opportunities that will advance their careers while they contribute to our nation's CT efforts.

Next, I have always been impressed with the robust partnerships NCTC has forged with Executive Branch agencies, foreign counterparts, as well as state, local, tribal, territorial and private sector partners. If we are to sustain gains made since 9/11 in reducing the threat of terrorism to the United States, we must not lose sight of the importance of CT relationships, both at home and abroad. NCTC must work collaboratively to anticipate the evolving, dynamic terrorist threat landscape. If confirmed, I intend to build on NCTC's past success by seeking to deepen relationships and working closely with key CT partners and stakeholders.

As past Directors have noted, although NCTC has matured and embraced its position as a recognized leader in our nation's CT efforts, the CT community continues to face new and difficult challenges. Complex data management and technical challenges make information analysis and sharing increasingly difficult. NCTC's support for watchlisting and screening and its all-source analytic efforts rely on cutting-edge tools and clear, consistent data management policies to keep pace with the evolving terrorist threat. If confirmed, I would work to ensure NCTC

strengthens and retains a cadre of highly skilled, technology-focused, data-fluent professionals who can help bring valuable knowledge about the challenges of rapidly evolving technology and its impact on our ability to analyze and manage CT data.

Since 9/11, persistent, coordinated CT pressure has removed key terrorist leaders, blunted certain terrorist groups' capabilities, and fundamentally weakened the overall threat posed to the U.S. homeland. However, the underlying drivers of terrorism—such as instability, weak government institutions, and highly connected networks—present conditions terrorists will continue to exploit, whether to threaten regional interests or to reconstitute platforms for transnational attacks. While today's terrorist threat to the United States has evolved, it is no less urgent. It is more ideologically and geographically diffuse, emanating from more groups, in more places, and leveraging more sophisticated technology than in 2001. NCTC will need to remain at the forefront of the fight against terrorism in all its forms, anticipating and detecting groups' and individuals' intentions and capabilities to harm the United States and its interests.

Inside the country, we also face the enduring challenge of Homegrown Violent Extremists inspired by international terrorist groups as well as the growing threat of Domestic Violent Extremists. These lone or loosely organized actors seek to use violence to advance a wide range of extremist agendas, and their diffuse nature adds to the challenge of detecting and disrupting their activities.

My vision is for NCTC to lead and integrate the national CT effort by recruiting and retaining talented, diverse CT professionals, strengthening its partnerships at home and abroad, effectively managing data, and continuing to produce timely, comprehensive assessments of the strategic and evolving terrorist threat.

**QUESTION 9:** What specific benchmarks should be used to assess NCTC's performance?

**ANSWER:** I believe that if an organization is to successfully achieve its objectives, it must regularly measure its performance and evaluate progress against key performance indicators to course correct when necessary. An organization with NCTC's missions of serving as the DNI's principal CT adviser and ensuring that all agencies receive all-source intelligence support must sustain the highest caliber of performance across the full spectrum of its responsibilities. If confirmed as Director of NCTC, I commit to reviewing NCTC's performance metrics and evaluating whether new or different performance indicators should be tracked and

evaluated on a regular basis.

### ***Intergovernmental and Interagency Cooperation***

**QUESTION 10:** What is NCTC's role in producing and disseminating intelligence for state, local, and tribal partners?

**ANSWER:** My understanding of NCTC's role in producing and disseminating intelligence to state, local, and tribal partners is consistent with the understanding of past Directors. The IRTPA established NCTC to ensure that agencies receive all-source intelligence support needed to execute their CT plans and that such agencies have access to and receive intelligence needed to accomplish their assigned activities. The IRTPA also stipulates that NCTC is to support appropriate agencies in fulfillment of their responsibilities to disseminate terrorism information to state, local, tribal and territorial, and private sector partners.

I understand that one significant vehicle through which NCTC executes this supporting function is the Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (JCAT), which is located at NCTC and staffed by NCTC, DHS, and FBI personnel as well as state, local, tribal, and territorial government public safety officers. JCAT's mission is to improve information sharing by producing clear, relevant, and coordinated threat information on significant terrorism-related events and terrorist tactics, techniques, and procedures that have the potential to enhance local or regional public safety conditions in the United States.

**QUESTION 11:** How is that role different than that of the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security?

**ANSWER:** The FBI and DHS have independent statutory missions to provide terrorism information directly to state, local, and tribal, and territorial officials. NCTC supports the FBI and DHS in carrying out their missions consistent with its statutory authorities. In so doing, NCTC leverages its access to the full range of USG CT intelligence to inform products for state, local, tribal, and territorial partners. As the primary organization in the USG for analyzing and integrating all international and transnational terrorism information, NCTC is uniquely positioned to ensure the FBI and DHS have access to and receive all-source intelligence support to execute their CT missions.

**QUESTION 12:** What is your understanding of the amount and nature of counterterrorism cooperation among NCTC, FBI, and DHS?

**ANSWER:** NCTC was designed by statute to support the CT missions of other USG components. Perhaps most critically, this mandate ensures NCTC works closely with the FBI and DHS, on a daily basis, to support those organizations' CT activities and collaborate on a range of terrorism-related intelligence production. For example, NCTC regularly co-authors intelligence assessments with the FBI and DHS, particularly on threats inside the United States; collaborates with DHS and the FBI to develop whole-of-government CT plans, strategies, and assessments; and deploys Domestic Representatives across the United States who work hand-in-hand with DHS and FBI field elements.

**QUESTION 13:** If confirmed, what priority would you give intergovernmental and interagency cooperation?

**ANSWER:** The U.S. CT program is built on a foundation of cooperation. NCTC and other USG components with CT missions and those with information relevant to the effective exercise of those missions have worked together over nearly two decades to form critical partnerships for collaboration and information sharing. As many USG components realign mission priorities to meet other pressing national security issues, maintaining these partnerships, and leading their evolution as appropriate, is all the more critical. If confirmed, one of my top priorities will be to ensure that NCTC continues to maintain and develop such lines of cooperation. The Center's strong relationships within the IC, including with the CIA, the National Security Agency, and the Defense Intelligence Agency, are critical to the U.S. CT program. NCTC, DHS, and the FBI must also continue to work together to provide state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector partners with timely and accurate information on terrorism. This also includes working closely with this Committee and other relevant committees of Congress in furtherance of effective oversight of intelligence and CT activities. If confirmed, I commit to keeping the congressional intelligence oversight committees fully and currently informed consistent with the requirements of Title V of the National Security Act and other federal law.

### ***Strategic Operational Planning***

**QUESTION 14:** To what extent does the Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning develop interagency plans for counterterrorism operations?

**ANSWER:** My understanding aligns with that of past Directors in that NCTC's Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning (DSOP) develops whole-of-

government CT plans, assessments, and posture reviews to engage in cross-agency collaboration for the CT mission. DSOP supports policy implementation and serves as the integration point for CT intelligence and operations across agency boundaries. NCTC's CT plans address a variety of CT objectives, to include regional and functional issues, such as terrorism prevention and weapons of mass destruction. The strategic operational planning process integrates all phases of the planning cycle—developing a plan, monitoring its implementation, and assessing its effectiveness and resourcing—and creates communities of interest to coordinate and integrate implementation. DSOP-led plans and strategies generally incorporate all instruments of national power—which may include CT operations—into broader CT strategies and plans.

**QUESTION 15:** To what extent does the Directorate coordinate or integrate the IC strategic planning with that of the Department of Defense and other components of the U.S. Government?

**ANSWER:** When the NSC designates DSOP as the lead planning entity for a particular effort, my understanding is that DSOP engages broadly across the Executive Branch to ensure representatives from all relevant departments and agencies are appropriately involved in strategic policy planning that are necessary to achieve the objectives for a particular effort. DSOP-led strategies and plans help guide the implementation of departments' and agencies' CT efforts. Once in effect, DSOP assesses overall progress against the goals of interagency plans and reviews the extent to which resources are in place to achieve the objectives.

**QUESTION 16:** Please describe your assessment of the challenge presented by this responsibility and what should be done to improve NCTC's performance of it.

**ANSWER:** My initial assessment is similar to those of past Directors. Terrorism in all of its forms is becoming increasingly diffuse and complex, requiring DSOP and its interagency partners to develop effective strategies and plans that tailor to different categories of threats, whether they be self-radicalized lone actors, organized international terrorist groups, or domestic violent extremists with ties abroad. The complexity of the threat environment has also led to a greater number and variety of relevant CT partners and interagency tools to integrate and coordinate. I understand DSOP's challenge is to ensure this diverse landscape is well-organized as part of a coherent strategy to posture the United States against whatever form the terrorist threat presents.

Since its creation, DSOP has worked with its interagency partners to integrate USG

CT activities. It is most effective when it serves as an unbiased broker in a diverse CT community, helping to coordinate issues among departments and agencies and integrate what may otherwise seem to be disparate CT efforts. In my experience working with DSOP, I have seen the organization effectively balance the equities of each organization in the CT enterprise and address competing views and requirements in a coherent fashion to provide executable, whole-of-government solution sets. If confirmed as the Director of NCTC, I would look for ways to strengthen NCTC's approach to strategic operational planning and will work closely with my counterparts in the CT enterprise to ensure DSOP is supporting long-term strategic CT planning efforts vital to national security.

**QUESTION 17:** What is the role of the NCTC Director in developing the National Intelligence Priorities Framework with regard to counterterrorism?

**ANSWER:** The Director of NCTC is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the National Intelligence Priorities Framework for Counterterrorism (NIPF-CT) priorities, which inform IC decisions on collection, analysis, and resource allocation. These priorities are updated on a quarterly basis with support from IC elements and integrated into the ODNI's overall NIPF process. If confirmed, I would ensure that NIPF-CT priorities provide clear guidance for the most effective and efficient allocation of our critical, limited resources.

**QUESTION 18:** What is your view of the proper role of Congress in overseeing the activities of the Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning?

**ANSWER:** The congressional intelligence oversight committees have critical oversight roles for all intelligence activities. If confirmed, I would ensure the committees are fully and currently informed of all NCTC intelligence activities consistent with the requirements of Title V of the National Security Act and other federal law.

**QUESTION 19:** Do you believe the Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning is fulfilling its mission as outlined under IRTPA?

**ANSWER:** I had the opportunity to work directly with DSOP during my tenure on the NSC Staff, as well as when I served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia. I saw first-hand the value that the relatively small office had to the NSC and the broader CT community. No other organization has the perspective that DSOP brings to the table. It serves as an

objective, unbiased integrator with insight into how to leverage and coordinate tools from across all elements of national power against what can be some of the most intractable problems in the CT community. DSOP's authorities and mission are unique within the national security community. It is staffed by a collection of ODNI cadre and detailees from across the government who provide an important service in drafting and coordinating interagency strategies and proposals for NSC consideration. It directly supports agencies in identifying and addressing implementation challenges to those strategies, and providing transparency across the departments and agencies while conducting substantive and budget assessments of the CT enterprise. Based on my dealings with DSOP, I believe it plays a critical role in ensuring that national CT efforts are as effective, efficient and well-coordinated as possible, especially during a time of competing national priorities.

### *National Intelligence Manager for Counterterrorism*

As the National Intelligence Manager for Counterterrorism, the NCTC Director identifies intelligence gaps and resource constraints and sets collection and analytic priorities.

**QUESTION 20:** What is your vision for fulfilling the role of National Intelligence Manager for Counterterrorism?

**ANSWER:** My vision of the Director's role as the CT mission manager is consistent with that of past Directors. The role of mission manager allows the Director of NCTC to be a proactive leader in the IC and CT community. If confirmed, my top priority would be to ensure that the CT community remains postured to prevent, detect, and deter terrorist threats to the United States and its interests, despite an increasingly diversified threat and other national security concerns that may draw resources away from the CT fight.

The role of the mission manager is to be an honest broker who can work across the CT community to balance risks, find efficiencies and opportunities for collaboration, and communicate sometimes difficult options for senior policymaker decisions. In the IC, there is a tremendous demand placed on our limited national collection platforms, analytic resources, and other capabilities that are shared with other vital national security priorities. The role of the CT mission manager is important because it ensures all those across the CT community understand how to efficiently and effectively leverage collective resources to meet the nation's CT objectives.

Ensuring well-drafted strategies that are monitored and regularly assessed is another important aspect of the mission manager's role. The priorities and overall approach for the IC are set by the National Security Strategy, National Strategy for Counterterrorism, National Strategy for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism, and National Intelligence Strategy. If confirmed, I will work closely with the CT community to effectively execute and support those strategies that articulate priority issues and national CT objectives.

**QUESTION 21:** What is the role of the NCTC Director in providing guidance with regard to the allocation of counterterrorism resources among and within elements of the IC? Please also describe how the NCTC Director should identify unnecessary or less critical programs and seek to reallocate funding, within resource constraints.

**ANSWER:** Similar to the views expressed by past Directors, I believe the role of the mission manager is to provide resource guidance to the CT community and serve as the principal adviser to the DNI for CT priorities. To fulfill this role, as outlined in the IRTPA, the Director of NCTC must collaborate with CT program managers across the IC to understand resource priorities, shortfalls, and redundancies. The Director must have the ability to identify critical resource investments and be an effective advocate and leader for the CT community within the intelligence planning, programming, budgeting and execution process. If confirmed, I will ensure close collaboration with interagency partners to drive our singular CT enterprise in a way that best protects the country.

**QUESTION 22:** What are the most important counterterrorism gaps or shortfalls across the IC?

**ANSWER:** As past Directors have noted, terrorism is an adaptive threat and the USG's ability to identify gaps and shortfalls in a timely and efficient manor is vital to continued success. Along these lines, three issues are particularly concerning: adapting to the rapid pace of technological advancement; managing and efficiently exploiting IC data; and improving screening and vetting support capabilities.

First, while rapidly evolving technology has supported the IC's mission, it has also provided the nation's adversaries with new capabilities to use against us. To stay ahead of these adversaries, the IC must find ways to appropriately acquire and adapt new technologies while mitigating the threat of terrorist use of technology.

Second, the IC has the benefit of large datasets; however, it must identify solutions

to effectively standardize, integrate, and process increasingly large holdings. These solutions must include innovative approaches to information sharing and access. Data management and integrity are vital to NCTC's efforts to support watchlisting and other screening mechanisms and to provide international partners the timely, relevant information they need to keep terrorists from reaching the U.S. Homeland.

Additionally, I understand there are a number of challenges related to screening and vetting support. For example, the challenge of integrating biometric data, such as fingerprints and facial images, into screening of biographic data. NCTC will need to be able to address these types of challenges to help the USG enable a persona-based system of performing identity intelligence.

Finally, as I have experienced throughout my CT career, the CT community has developed effective, well-integrated processes across departments and agencies that enable the full force of the community to bring coordinated pressure against identified threats. Many of those CT capabilities are interdependent; when one element makes a decision about its own capabilities or resources, there can often be second- and third-order effects for other CT entities. With this in mind, NCTC's role in supporting the community's collective efforts and providing a strategic view of the nation's CT resource outlook are arguably more important now than ever.

All of these issues are critical for continued IC success in keeping the U.S. homeland protected against major terrorist threats. They will require continued focus, and investments in time and resources.

**QUESTION 23:** The U.S. Government and the IC are refocusing on geopolitical threats like China and Russia. As resources shift, what steps do you believe should be taken to minimize unnecessary analytic redundancy in the IC counterterrorism space?

**ANSWER:** As resources shift to other priority national security issues, I believe that NCTC is well postured to maintain its focus on leading and integrating the CT mission to avoid strategic surprise. If confirmed, as prescribed in the IRTPA, I will partner with leaders across the CT enterprise to ensure we minimize unnecessary analytic redundancy, maximize our use of CT resources, and ensure CT analysis is integrated to support broader national security and foreign policy aims.

**QUESTION 24:** The Committee requested a briefing from the Counterterrorism Mission Management office concerning the use of National Intelligence Program

funds for countering domestic terrorism, and the authorities that govern IC activities related to domestic terrorism. To this point, NCTC has declined to provide a briefing to the Committee's staff. Do you commit to providing the Committee with this briefing and fulfilling future information requests as necessitated by the Committee's IC oversight mandate?

**ANSWER:** If confirmed, I commit to providing the briefing. I believe that communicating with the Congress on a regular and continuing basis enables the USG to further its collective ability to address the threats the nation faces today and prevent further terrorist attacks, while ensuring that parts of the USG such as NCTC are exercising their respective authorities consistent with the law. Given many of the IC's activities must remain classified, this relationship is all the more important. Intelligence oversight is critical to the successful operation of the IC; in this respect, I view the congressional intelligence oversight committees as true partners within the United States' CT community.

### *Congressional Oversight*

**QUESTION 25:** What do you understand to be the obligation of the NCTC Director, in support of the DNI, to keep the congressional intelligence committees fully and currently informed about matters relating to compliance with the Constitution and laws?

**ANSWER:** Congressional oversight is an essential part of our constitutional system of checks and balances, and I believe it is critical to the success of the IC, and the ODNI, to include NCTC. Under Section 502 of the National Security Act, the DNI and the heads of departments and agencies involved in intelligence activities are required to keep the congressional intelligence committees fully and currently informed of intelligence activities. Previous DNIs have issued IC-wide directives on the subject of congressional notifications to ensure timely reporting to the Congress consistent with the National Security Act. If confirmed as the Director of NCTC, I would abide by these and other applicable requirements. I would also ensure that I remain responsive to the congressional intelligence oversight process, ensure congressional notifications are timely, accurate, and complete, and support the DNI in the same.

### *Professional Experience*

**QUESTION 26:** Please describe specifically how your experiences will enable you to serve as NCTC Director.

**ANSWER:** My diverse CT background, experiences in both the IC and national security policy arenas, and strong record of leading innovative teams in government and the private sector position me to be an effective NCTC Director, if confirmed.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks on our nation compelled me to work for the Department of Defense where I served as a CT intelligence officer, authoring and leading assessments of strategic terrorism trends across the Middle East and Asia Pacific. I wrote numerous strategic intelligence assessments, contributed to various National Intelligence Estimates, provided intelligence support to CT operations, deployed several times to the Middle East region in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, and led analytic teams assessing the plans, intentions and capabilities of Lebanese Hizballah, Al-Qaida in Iraq/Islamic State in Iraq, Al-Qa'ida Core, Lashkar e-Tayyiba, and other terrorist groups and individuals.

In 2011, I transitioned from a producer to a consumer of intelligence by serving at the NSC, where I provided key contributions to the national security decision-making process. At the NSC, I worked closely with NCTC and other IC components to understand CT trends and task relevant CT assessments that helped drive whole-of-government strategic policy coordination, both across the interagency and with relevant international partners and allies. Informed by this whole-of-government process, I crafted for the President, his National Security Advisor, the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (APHSCT), and the Deputy National Security Advisor CT policy recommendations and key background information in advance of critical decisions, summits, and meetings.

My assignment at the NSC broadened considerably when I was asked to serve as the Senior Policy Advisor to the AHSCT. In this role, I not only tracked global CT threats and policy issues, but also engaged on cyber, intelligence, operational, foreign partner, and homeland security related tasks. I ensured clear, complete, timely, and well-considered support to the NSC Staff and AHSCT.

In 2014, I transitioned back to the Department of Defense in the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy to lead the Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia office. In this role, I established defense policy positions associated with the region. I made recommendations to the Secretary of Defense regarding U.S. and NATO troop levels; provided policy oversight for over \$5 billion in congressional appropriations for regional security cooperation programs; and coordinated within

the Defense Department and the national security interagency to implement decisions related to the region, including those of the President and the Secretary of Defense. I also engaged foreign counterparts, Members of Congress, and other stakeholders to communicate Administration decisions and policy positions relevant to U.S. national security interests. In this policy role, as in the others I occupied, I relied heavily on intelligence assessments from across the community and in theater to formulate key Defense policy recommendations and decisions for the region.

My role in government concluded in 2017, as the lead for the Defense Innovation Unit (Experimental) (DIUx) in Austin, Texas, where I worked with our warfighters to understand their strategic and operational needs and the private sector innovation ecosystems that could support them. Later that year, I took on a global leadership role in the private sector, working across time zones and cultures to lead several hundred team members in a mission to develop, implement, and ensure compliance to strategies that fundamentally ensured trust in the company's global manufacturing and procurement operations.

### *Staffing*

**QUESTION 27:** NCTC operates a joint manning model with detailees from across the IC. Do you believe this model is still the best way to staff NCTC, and what do you see as the advantages and challenges associated with this model?

**ANSWER:** Having people with unique knowledge, skills, and backgrounds is critical to fulfilling NCTC's mission; I believe IC detailees are an essential component to ensuring the right mix of talent resides at NCTC. As the hub of the nation's CT efforts, NCTC is at its best when its workforce can seamlessly incorporate perspectives from across the CT community as it executes its mission. I understand that drawing detailees from other departments and agencies has become more challenging as agencies shift staff to address competing priorities. If confirmed, I will focus on attracting detailees by building strong relationships with my interagency partners and conveying the value of a robust, interagency CT workforce at NCTC.

In addition to its detailee program, I understand NCTC has a robust recruitment and training program that brings entry-level employees into the organization to expand the knowledge, skills, and abilities of its diverse workforce. In addition to their work at NCTC, I understand many from this cadre have an opportunity to serve on external rotations throughout the government and on foreign

deployments; these experiences provide value to the Center, the employees, and the overall CT mission.

**QUESTION 28:** Do you believe that NCTC is appropriately organized and staffed to counter the current and emerging terrorist threats? If not, what do you think needs to be changed to better address the threats?

**ANSWER:** Since the Center's resource profile is classified, this is something I would examine in greater detail if confirmed. NCTC has always adapted to meet the terrorist threat picture, and as the Center seeks to support IC, law enforcement, and homeland security partners across a range of terrorism issues, both foreign and domestic, I will work with the ODNI leadership team, CT partners, and the Congress to make sure that the Center is postured to address the challenges of today as well as the emerging threats of the future. This includes having the right mix of permanent cadre and detailee officers to provide both continuity and collaboration across the Community.

### *Questions from Senator Wyden*

#### *Domestic Terrorism*

**QUESTION 29:** IRTPA, in describing the primary missions of NCTC, excludes "intelligence pertaining exclusively to domestic terrorists and domestic counterterrorism." How should NCTC interpret this provision? What indication of a transnational nexus should be sufficient for NCTC to deem a terrorist threat as part of its primary mission?

**ANSWER:** Generally speaking, under the IRTPA, NCTC's role regarding domestic terrorists and domestic CT is one of providing support to the FBI and DHS, which are the primary agencies responsible for protecting the homeland against domestic terrorist threats. To facilitate this support, NCTC is authorized to receive, retain, and disseminate intelligence pertaining exclusively to domestic counterterrorism. Among NCTC's supporting functions is ensuring that USG agencies have access to and receive all-source intelligence support needed to execute their CT plans or perform independent, alternative analysis. Perhaps most critically, leveraging its primary mission as the USG's central and shared knowledge bank on KSTs and international terrorist groups, I believe NCTC is well-positioned to support the FBI and DHS in working to identify whether threats that present domestically have a nexus to transnational terrorism.

**QUESTION 30:** In the absence of intelligence indicating a transnational nexus, what role should NCTC play in supporting law enforcement investigations into domestic terrorist threats?

**ANSWER:** I believe NCTC is uniquely equipped to assist the FBI and DHS in identifying any nexus to transnational terrorism, consistent with NCTC's primary mission and authorities. Where NCTC identifies no nexus to transnational terrorism, it is my understanding that NCTC's activities, such as partnership on analytic products examining a particular domestic terrorist threat or attack, would be undertaken in support of the FBI and DHS.

***Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE)***

*IRTPA includes among NCTC's primary missions, "[t]o serve as the central and shared knowledge bank on known and suspected terrorists and international terror groups, as well as their goals, strategies, capabilities, and networks of contacts and support."*

**QUESTION 31:** As counterterrorism data becomes more voluminous, what new policies and technological approaches may be necessary to manage TIDE? What new privacy policies may be necessary to keep up with the expansion of TIDE?

**ANSWER:** I understand that NCTC has focused on technological modernization efforts to improve its CT knowledge, including with respect to identity resolution and biometrics. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about these types of technological advancements. More generally, with respect to the management of TIDE, I believe it is important for NCTC to continue to work closely with the IC and with Civil Liberty and Privacy officers to identify any policy or privacy issues that may arise from new processes and technologies.

**QUESTION 32:** Should U.S. persons or persons in the United States who are not known or suspected terrorists be included in TIDE? If so, what standards and guidelines should apply?

**ANSWER:** As the USG's classified database on KSTs and international terror groups, as well as their goals, strategies, capabilities, and networks of contacts and support, I understand TIDE includes individuals with connections to terrorism who do not meet the definition of a KST, including some U.S. persons. These identities can provide valuable analytic and investigatory leads, but we must ensure that U.S. person information in TIDE is handled appropriately and with the utmost respect

for privacy and civil liberties. I understand any U.S. person information in TIDE is clearly identified and that NCTC works closely with its Civil Liberties and Privacy Officer and General Counsel in this regard.

NCTC is dedicated to the proper handling and protection of this information, and has a well-established, robust compliance program that includes mandatory annual training on the proper handling and protection of information; NCTC's legal authorities for the access, use, and retention of U.S. person information; and NCTC's agreements with its data providers.

If confirmed, I will endeavor to further advance a compliance mindset within NCTC by ensuring these activities continue and are staffed properly. I will also ensure that new IT systems and advanced analytic techniques build into their designs proper data handling and information protection requirements. In addition, I will make sure that the USG CT users of TIDE treat U.S. person information with the same stringent protections as required by Center policy and the law.

***Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism (RMVE)***

**QUESTION 33:** What is your view of the international and transnational threat posed by Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism (RMVE)?

**ANSWER:** As reflected in the April 9, 2021 ODNI Annual Threat Assessment, violence committed by racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs) is a concerning terrorism threat facing not only the United States but also many of the nation's allies. Regrettably, this is not a new threat. RMVEs have posed a direct threat to U.S. citizens overseas, such as those present during the October 2019 Yom Kippur shooting at a synagogue in Halle, Germany, though thankfully no U.S. citizens were injured in that incident. The March 2019 attack at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand is an example of a close U.S. ally threatened by RMVEs. If confirmed, I would ensure that NCTC provides appropriate support to the DNI, IC partners, and other relevant departments and agencies in understanding and addressing the transnational RMVE threat.

**QUESTION 34:** What is your view of the appropriate level of NCTC resource allocation toward the international and transnational RMVE threat?

**ANSWER:** RMVE is a significant concern for the Administration, as reflected in the recent ODNI Annual Threat Assessment. If confirmed, I would ensure that NCTC devotes resources to RMVE issues commensurate with the threat and in line

with the President's overall national intelligence and CT priorities.

**QUESTION 35:** The IC's April 2021 Annual Threat Assessment stated: "Australia, Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom consider white racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists, including Neo-Nazi groups, to be the fastest growing terrorist threat they face." How should the IC engage in bilateral and multilateral counterterrorism cooperation against the RMVE threat?

**ANSWER:** The IC's ability to capitalize on its already strong partnerships with Western counterparts is essential to addressing the increase in the RMVE threat. Information sharing is key to this approach, consistent with the law, Attorney General-approved guidelines for the protection of U.S. person information, and respect for privacy and civil liberties. The IC should help to facilitate the proactive sharing of intelligence on RMVE threats with and among foreign partners, including information on trends in the United States and abroad. Additionally, sharing best practices to address the domestic violent extremist threats and soliciting partners' domestic RMVE strategies would foster CT partnership with foreign counterparts.

In addition to these efforts, the Administration's recent endorsement of the Christchurch Call to Action to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online, which is supported by over 50 foreign governments, international organizations, and technology companies, is another example of multilateral and private sector partnership to combat the threat of violent extremism consistent with fundamental protections for freedom of expression and our values as a nation.