SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

UNITED STATES SENATE

Additional Questions for Dr. Roger Mason upon his nomination to be Director of the National Reconnaissance Office

Responsibilities of the Director of the National Reconnaissance Office

The National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) was established as a joint Intelligence Community (IC) and Department of Defense (DoD) organization to develop, launch, and operate America's signals, imagery, and communications satellites to enable its IC mission partners to produce intelligence products for Congress, the Executive Branch, and the military.

QUESTION 1: What is your understanding of the unique role that the NRO occupies within the IC?

As a member of the Intelligence Community (IC) and as a component of the Department of War (DoW), the NRO operates as part of an integrated IC, while serving the information and intelligence needs of the Secretary of War (SW) to meet their overhead intelligence requirements. The NRO mission is to develop, acquire, launch, and operate overhead reconnaissance systems and associated ground command and control, mission management, processing, and communications segments. The NRO partners across the IC, DOW, and civil space organizations, such as the CIA, National Security Agency, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, United States Space Force, U.S. Space Command, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Working closely with these mission partners, the NRO provides policy makers, analysts, and warfighters timely access to high-value intelligence data used to produce intelligence products for the President, Congress, national policy makers, and warfighters.

IC and DoW partners rely on NRO's expertise in acquisition management to accelerate capabilities across the national security enterprise to put more tools and information in the hands of analysts and warfighters faster than ever before.

QUESTION 2: What is your understanding of the specific responsibilities of the Director of the NRO?

The DNRO is responsible for executing NRO missions and activities as a Defense Agency and an element of the Intelligence Community. In this capacity, the DNRO is responsible for the management and operations of the NRO and serves as the principal advisor on overhead reconnaissance to the DNI, SW, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Combatant Commanders, the Secretary

of the Air Force, and the DoD Executive Agent for Space on all overhead reconnaissance matters. The DNRO is responsible for the strategic, top-level management of NRO's core responsibilities to develop technology, acquire systems, launch space assets, and operate the overhead reconnaissance constellations in an integrated architecture that includes ground-based processing facilities, communication ground stations, and classified IT network systems. The DNRO is responsible for management and development of the combined NRO workforce in conjunction with military and USG personnel providers. In terms of budget responsibility, the DNRO develops and executes the NRO budget within NIP and MIP program and resources. In acquisition, the DNRO serves as the Senior Acquisition Executive for the NRO, oversees the acquisition programs and ensures quality deliverables, timely completion and affordability within budgets. Operationally, the DNRO is responsible for monitoring operational status of all satellites, data processing facilities, and communications nodes to ensure the capabilities are mission capable. This includes managing the physical facilities and digital assets required to execute space, ground, and cyber operations with the appropriate security and safety.

QUESTION 3: Have you discussed with Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Gabbard her specific future expectations of you, and her future expectations of the NRO as a whole? If so, please describe these expectations.

Yes, I met with Director Gabbard early in the process and discussed my qualifications, my proposed priorities, and how these priorities fulfill the responsibilities of the Director of the NRO. My view is there was good alignment with these priorities, and if confirmed, I will look forward to discussing these priorities with the DNI in greater detail, on a regular basis, to ensure NRO is meeting the DNI's expectations.

QUESTION 4: Please describe any lessons you have drawn from the experiences of current and former Directors of the NRO.

While in government service and on post-government assignments I have worked directly with the last three Directors of the NRO, Director Carlson, Director Sapp, and Director Scolese. Through these interactions, I learned many lessons from their leadership. An overarching lesson from all of them is how important it was for the Director to adapt their leadership styles to the challenges and opportunities faced at while in office. Specific lessons include: setting strategic clarity while instilling mission focus and delivering on commitments; the importance of bringing the whole organization, technical, business and support to

deliver results; the importance of keeping focus on the warfighter and intelligence missions and ensuring NIP and MIP resources are used appropriately and constructively; the ability to focus on affordability in a challenging budget environment while keeping an eye towards future capabilities; and finally, the importance of building and growing a vibrant, integrated workforce, particularly during times of rapid change.

Previous Experience

You have served in numerous positions across the Intelligence Community and the aerospace and defense industries.

QUESTION 5: If confirmed, how would you use your industry perspective to the benefit of the NRO?

My aerospace, defense and intelligence industry experience substantially included all phases of NRO's mission, most functions that the NRO provides, and all intelligence domains in which the NRO executes its mission. My experience ranges from field operations to the c-suite to the boardroom at companies small and large, new and traditional.

The sum of this experience puts me in a unique position that, if confirmed, would enable me to lead the NRO with a better ability to understand and shape industry behavior for the benefit of the mission. If confirmed, my understanding of how industry makes key decisions and what is important to these companies will help place the NRO in a stronger position to leverage the best industry has to offer government. Industry faces decisions that include how to make investment decisions; drive performance; correct problematic programs; manage manufacturing lines; allocate personnel across program needs; position within public markets, private equity, or venture capital; respond to demand slow-downs, government shutdowns, and continuing resolutions; and apply the best contract type to influence behavior. These and other decisions affect industry's relationship with the government.

Simply put, my diverse industry experience is a unique strength, that combined with prior government service, I could greatly help NRO during a time when the industry relationships are going through a period of substantive change.

QUESTION 6: As Assistant Director of National Intelligence for Systems and Resource Analyses (ADNI/SRA), you served as the DNI's principal intelligence officer and trusted advisor on all matters dealing with intelligence capabilities, resources, requirements, systems analysis, program analysis, and cost analysis.
If confirmed, how would you employ lessons learned from your role at ODNI?

My experience as the ADNI(SRA) centered on the intersection where future intelligence capabilities, IC requirements and cost analysis came together to enable better integrated decisions—areas that were previously separate. If confirmed, this would have a substantial influence on my leadership of the NRO.

Determining future capability investments across the entire IC provided me valuable insight on how NRO systems fit into the larger collection capabilities across the intelligence domains. Here I learned that data-driven performance models from multiple organizations produce better informed decisions for future systems.

As ADNI(SRA) I was responsible for establishing and managing the IC capability requirements process, which required substantial interaction with the functional managers, mission end-users, and capability providers. I learned first-hand the importance of the relationship between the functional managers and NRO in determining the capability requirements that drive future system requirements. This underscored the importance of early engagement and tightly coupled communications throughout the acquisition and fielding process.

Conducting early cost analyses, independent cost estimates and affordability assessments was the third major area of responsibilities for ADNI(SRA). Here I learned the importance of considering costs early in the development process while balancing the ability for innovation. This is clearly important for NRO—an organization developing leading-edge capabilities with the responsibility of managing and being accountable for a major portion of the IC's budget. I also learned the value of using top-down independent cost estimates in conjunction with bottoms-up agency cost positions on major system acquisitions to create a more informed view.

Finally, as ADNI(SRA) I brought the National Intelligence Program (NIP) and Military Intelligence Program (MIP) stakeholders together to ensure a more integrated approach for intelligence resources. I learned valuable

lessons in forming the NIP-MIP integration working group to solve issues and formulating the Consolidated Intelligence Guidance to drive complementary and reinforcing program decisions. As the NRO's mission and resources also span the DoW and the IC, I would use this experience align the NRO to the requirements of both stakeholders.

QUESTION 7: What lessons did you learn about program and cost analysis in this capacity that you can apply to NRO's mission?

The program and cost analysis part of my ADNI(SRA) responsibilities is directly relevant to the NRO's mission. The ODNI requirements process underscored the importance of the functional managers in setting capability requirements and working closely with IC agencies such as the NRO to successfully transition those requirements to system requirements. The communication between NGA and NSA with NRO was essential to make this happen. The ability to synthesize multiple analyses of alternatives and data-driven projections was also important to success here. In conducting cost analyses, I learned the value of using multiple sources and methods of cost estimating to reveal where there is convergence or divergence. My understanding of the uncertainties with cost and the "track record" of the entity producing those costs was equally important. This understanding is particularly critical during the early phases of a program where concepts are first being defined and there is limited bottoms-up cost data available, requiring the use of other methods to judge total ownership costs.

In summary, I believe the functions that I executed as ADNI(SRA) are relevant for the complex decisions the NRO makes with respect to the National Reconnaissance Program.

QUESTION 8: What work did you conduct in this role related to NRO's missions and function?

Many of SRA's future-looking studies either centered on or involved NRO's development of collection capabilities. These studies involved investments in new NRO systems, modifications to existing systems, or program terminations to meet the demands of budget sequestration. During this time, NRO developed most of the major systems acquisitions, and SRA's role in that process was substantial and continuous. Its role started with analysis of alternatives at the early stage, developing the statement of capabilities, and producing independent cost estimates. These efforts continued through all the milestone decision points. Also, SRA was

responsible for reviewing performance of prior decisions involving NRO capabilities through strategic evaluation reports and producing the annual affordability assessment for the National Reconnaissance Program.

QUESTION 9: How did this role inform your understanding of the DNI's role as it relates to NRO management and oversight?

The DNI is in the unique position to lead IC integration, and the ADNI(SRA) was a critical tool by which the DNI exercised management and oversight of the NRO. While in my role, I learned the power of integration, the need to focus on the issues that matter, and the importance of leading from the top. Exercising good oversight should come with creating insight for the IC agencies that goes beyond just grading performance and compliance but instead enables a higher order of management.

Successful oversight also demands IC agencies look beyond their own capabilities toward their role in a much greater intelligence system, seeking ways they can contribute to a collective IC capability. During my time in government, I focused major DNI resource decisions on issues that spanned multiple agencies or crossed multiple missions. At the same time, I appreciated where resource decisions should be held within an individual IC element when they are in the best position to do so within the framework of the DNI processes and systems. This created a healthy relationship between the DNI and the IC elements, a relationship best aligned to the relative strengths and resources of the DNI and component agency.

Finally, setting the management and oversight relationship at the top echelon produces better outcomes. Our objective at SRA was to move decisions up and to the left, involving the principals earlier in the process. To do this, SRA established the Strategic Program Briefing prior to budget submissions, where the IC agency head and the DNI together reviewed the agency's approach to executing the DNI's guidance before the agency's formal budget submission. These small group meetings proved invaluable in resolving issues early and setting the tone from the top for subsequent budget execution.

QUESTION 10: How should the Director of the NRO relate to, inform, and advise the Director of National Intelligence on a regular basis?

The Director of the NRO should seek to keep the DNI regularly informed of operational status, programmatic progress, and key decisions. This can be

achieved through tailored weekly activity reports, informal discussions and emails on hot topics, and immersion visits on key capabilities / topics, in addition to participation in routine DNI-led meetings.

QUESTION 11: How does the NRO interface with the ODNI regarding space-related matters?

I know that ODNI and NRO maintain regular communication at all levels from the leadership to the working level. If confirmed, I would expect to maintain and, if necessary, enhance those regular dialogues.

QUESTION 12: How did your time in the aerospace industry inform your understanding of how NRO should interact with commercial entities?

My experience in the aerospace industry spans every phase of NRO's mission, including satellite development, launch vehicle manufacturing, space command and control, communications ground systems development, mission management, space and ground communications network operations, advanced software capability development, and global space support operations.

When working with industry, it is important to understand that most well-run companies have a common goal of creating new opportunities to increase their top-line, earning a fair profit with the potential to increase margins based on performance, and building and offering career potential to retain a vibrant workforce; the relative emphasis of each depends on their ownership and shareholder base. With established aerospace companies, early engagement and regular communication during pre-concept activities, experiments, and demonstrations coupled with a relatively predictable future demand signal typically ensures success.

For commercial companies focused exclusively on space capabilities, the requirements process is key. To achieve maximum speed to market and cost savings, the government must have flexible requirements that adapt to the state-of-the-art in commercial capabilities. A hybrid approach integrating exquisite, government-unique capabilities with commercial marketplace-derived capabilities is proving to be a key principle in the new NRO architecture.

Lastly, early engagement with industry on future needs combined with stable demand projections, enables industry to innovate and allows government to bring in emerging technology companies. All industry benefits from experimentation

exercises, technology demonstrations, product "bake-offs," and similar activities where they can co-create ideas with the government.

QUESTION 13: How will you ensure that you support NRO's industrial base while not favoring any particular commercial entities?

The NRO works with the defense industry, commercial service and product providers, small businesses, research centers, and academia. NRO missions require unique knowledge and expertise across many scientific and technical domains. With the ongoing expansion of NRO's proliferated architecture and increasing requirements, the NRO must use a whole-of-industry approach with its contracts, identifying the best of breed to create larger advantages over U.S. adversaries. Lastly, competition breeds innovation, and it just makes good business sense.

NRO Missions and Capabilities

QUESTION 14: The NRO's primary mission is to procure, build, and deliver world-class satellites. If confirmed, how would you prioritize NRO's missions and capabilities?

If confirmed, my priorities for the NRO would be focused on meeting IC and DoW customer requirements. Building on the strong foundation and extraordinary successes of those who came before, I see the NRO at the forefront of national security space intelligence— an organization that continuously elevates it capabilities to provide ever greater decision advantage, in faster timelines, with richer insight, at all national security echelons, from the President to the warfighter in the field.

QUESTION 15: If confirmed, what steps will you take to improve the information-sharing, integration, coordination, and collaboration between NRO and the other IC agencies, in particular the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) and DoD?

Three decades of experience working on the national security and intelligence missions has taught me that ongoing communication is essential to collaboration between mission partners. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving in-depth briefings on the NRO's current relationships with IC, DoW, and other partners.

During my five years serving as the ADNI(SRA), I built strong relationships with CIA, NSA, NGA, DIA, the Joint Staff J2, and the military service intelligence components to ensure an integrated intelligence and defense approach to major program decisions. In that role, I delivered independent cost estimates for all major systems acquisitions and IC resource affordability analysis. These efforts succeeded because when making decisions I sought to understand issues from the perspectives of all the stakeholders.

In my current, private-sector role, I manage a broad scope of company-wide responsibilities that include strategy, growth operations, research & technology development, communications, marketing, competitive intelligence, pricing, external relations, and government affairs. I appreciate that in a company everyone has different roles to fill, and success comes from everyone working together towards a shared vision.

If confirmed, I would build partnerships with peer organizations by communicating progress on shared interests, listening to partners' needs, and informing technical, cost, and schedule requirements to ensure the space-based ISR architecture enables users to fulfill their missions.

QUESTION 16: If confirmed, how will you ensure that the tasking of NRO resources and personnel to support Space Force missions does not negatively impact its ability to support other mission partners and to fulfill NRO's core missions and capabilities?

The NRO is the world-leader in providing space-based intelligence collection and all the capabilities necessary to support those systems. As a result, the entire U.S. government has relied on the NRO since 1961 as a critical partner in their own space programs. Specifically, there exists a long legacy of successful partnership between the NRO and first the Air Force, and now, the Space Force. If confirmed as Director, my first responsibility will be to ensure success of the NRO mission, and that success will always require a strong, collaborative relationship with the Space Force. I am committed to a partnership that enhances both NRO and Space Force missions in pursuit of American national security.

QUESTION 17: If confirmed, how would you partner with private industry to accomplish NRO's missions?

From my industry experience, I know just what private industry can bring to the NRO mission, especially in developing technology and bringing it to scale. I have served on the board of several commercial space companies, guiding the growth of that sector. Industry frequently adopts new technology and implements innovative processes more rapidly than government can. From its unique vantage point, the NRO can observe the capabilities and performance of industry partners, combining this broad knowledge with its own expertise to bring together the best from industry to accomplish the NRO's unique missions.

QUESTION 18: In familiarizing yourself with NRO's existing vision and architectures, what are your thoughts about what you have seen in the organization, considering the massive shifts in the threat environment, the stand-up of Space Force, and the continued vibrant growth in the commercial sector in the U.S. and globally?

Threats to our space and ground systems are growing. The NRO appears to take these threats seriously by building resiliency into its architecture, both in space and on the ground. If confirmed, enterprise resilience will be a personal priority for me, and I look forward to better understanding the progress made so far, building on and continuing that work.

QUESTION 19: Please describe your views on NRO's role in enabling artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning.

I understand that AI capabilities are being integrated across the NRO enterprise in every mission portfolio to do things better and faster. I see artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) as essential to the NRO's ability to achieve its mission and enable the success of those who use the NRO's collection for their analytic, warfighting, and decision-making purposes. I believe the NRO is well placed to use, and even develop, AI/ML capabilities. I am not familiar with all the use-cases for AI/ML at the NRO, but I believe that the volume and speed of data delivered by NRO's next generation architecture, including proliferated systems, will require data processing and delivery at speed that only AI/ML can deliver. Applying appropriate AI/ML models and automation will be essential to managing the complexity of data and reducing the times between collection

requirement, tasking, collection, processing, and delivery to intelligence producing users. Finally, the NRO should leverage the expertise and experience of academia and industry to apply and adapt models, algorithms, techniques, and understanding of the supporting hardware and software so that the NRO can focus on application to mission, from current operations to research and development.

QUESTION 20: In recent years, there have been orders of magnitude growth in tipping and cueing between overhead satellites. Both NGA and NRO separately employ teams of specialized personnel to develop mission-based models to enable collection orchestration. How would you work to ensure an integrated approach to maximize the value of these low density, high demand personnel?

I perceive that the NRO is well positioned to develop and apply mission-based models to tip and cue overhead satellites, especially between phenomonologies and sensors. Tipping and cueing are fundamental to the management and maximized utility of larger, more complex satellite architecture. While I am not familiar with the details of NRO or NGA's current efforts, these models are an example of the kind of technology adoption required across IC. If confirmed, I would work to avoid duplication and take an integrated approach with partners such as the NGA to ensure the NRO provides the best intelligence possible.

QUESTION 21: One of NRO's top priorities is mission resiliency and survivability – not just the survivability of the spacecraft, but also of communication lines and of processing facilities. If confirmed, how would you approach prioritizing mission resiliency and survivability relative to other requirements?

If confirmed, a top priority for me will be enterprise resiliency – from space to ground – and survivability against threats including kinetic, electromagnetic, and cyber threats. The NRO will need to continually adapt and evolve to maintain the ability to operate through contested space and survive the use of adversarial counter-space capabilities. I do not see resiliency and survivability as a trade-off with other priorities; they are fundamental to the design of every space and ground system.

QUESTION 22: NRO needs not only to acquire space systems but also to ensure that the intelligence collected in space can quickly get to a user – whether an analyst, policymaker, or military user at the tactical edge. The boundary between space and ground increasingly blurs as we seek to perform

more processing onboard spacecraft. How do you see the relationship between NRO and NGA adapting to meet these conditions?

The rapid expansion of NRO's satellite architecture, featuring more sensors and more data, requires new prioritization and tasking processes to most efficiently and effectively enable IC to collect, analyze, and disseminate this growing volume of intelligence. Collection and processing must happen at machine speed, manual steps must be automated, and NRO and NGA systems must be integrated. This is a paradigm shift, but this is hardly a first for either agency, as both NRO and NGA have come a long way from the early days of aircraft catching film reels dropped from satellites in space. If confirmed, I intend to build on these decades of advancements through continuing to strengthen the partnership between both agencies.

QUESTION 23: As it relates to the procurement of commercial imagery data, NRO procures pixels, and NGA is responsible for developing or procuring value-added algorithms and data services. What are your views about this division of labor, and what are your views about the importance of procuring commercial remote sensing data?

I understand that NRO procures commercial remote sensing data across a range of phenomonologies. The U.S. commercial imagery industry is critical to the GEOINT mission both NRO and NGA shares, and both organizations should continue to work together to best take advantage of what commercial providers bring to the table. Without insight into the details of the current roles and responsibilities, I can say that the commercial providers have incredible value for specific missions, and both agencies should continue to investigate emerging commercial capabilities for further integration with national collection.

QUESTION 24: The increase in data coming down from new satellites and proliferated constellations translates into exponential increases in cloud and compute costs. What is your view on how NRO should consider these continued cost increases going forward?

Cloud computing has been and will continue to be an IC enabler. It allows processing and compute to scale with mission needs, it provides resiliency through disaggregated data centers, and it supports modern software development. That said, some systems, missions, or even data types are simply better suited to on-premises, dedicated hardware. As is true for any new requirement, the solution must consider the alternatives and tradeoffs, including costs.

QUESTION 25: NRO is focusing on traditional spacecraft as well as new proliferated constellations of "smaller" space systems. Less expensive commercial launch options have democratized access to space.

a. If confirmed, how would you plan to leverage commercial launch and use less expensive launch options to allow for more risk and more rapid replenishment of satellites?

The rapid expansion of space access through commercial launch providers is a strategic advantage for the United States, which the President is seeking to advance through his Executive Order on Enabling Competition in the Commercial Space Industry. If confirmed, I would plan to leverage this by partnering directly with the U.S. Space Force and its Space Systems Command (SSC) to fully exploit the flexible acquisition pathways within the National Security Space Launch (NSSL) program.

Through these partnerships, the government can shift its models to capitalize on frequent, lower-cost commercial launch cadences. By reducing the cost of putting mass into orbit, the government no longer needs to engineer every payload for decades-long survivability. This paradigm shift allows the government to accept more calculated risk in individual satellite components, use commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) technology, and field capabilities faster. Furthermore, by actively coordinating with SSC to integrate NSSL commercial launch options explicitly into reconstitution planning, the NRO can rapidly replenish degraded constellations, ensuring our warfighters never lose critical ISR support during sustained operations.

b. What are your views about the need for "on demand" launch and "on the shelf" satellites to potentially re-establish capacity in a wartime scenario?

In a wartime scenario, the ability to rapidly replenish or replace lost or degraded space assets is critical. Relying solely on legacy timelines, where satellites take years to build and months to integrate with a launch vehicle, is incompatible with modern pacing threats. "On the shelf" satellites, built to standardized interface specifications that are

quick to manufacture and integrate, combined with "on demand" launch capabilities, would guarantee that the NRO could restore capacity in time instead of late to need.

c. Do you believe that smaller satellites can begin to take on portions of missions that today's larger, more expensive satellites provide?

Yes. The laws of physics dictate that certain missions will always require the large apertures, power generation, and coverage of traditional exquisite systems, but smaller satellites are absolutely capable of taking on significant portions of the legacy mission portfolio. Advancements in miniaturization, edge computing, and commercial sensing have significantly closed the capability gap between small form-factor satellites and traditional large systems. I believe smaller satellites can now supplement subsets of the mission such as providing high-revisit electro-optical, synthetic aperture radar, and signals intelligence coverage. Rather than viewing this as a one-to-one replacement, I view small satellites as force multipliers in support of mission disaggregation. Small satellites can handle the bulk of routine, high-frequency intelligence gathering, freeing our larger, more exquisite satellites to focus on the most demanding, technical, and hard-to-reach targets.

d. What roles do you see small satellites playing in architecture?

Small satellites serve as the foundation of a resilient, proliferated architecture, providing persistent target custody, resilient communications, and complicating adversary targeting.

Operating in proliferated Low Earth Orbit small satellite constellations provides the continuous, high-revisit tactical ISR required to maintain custody of mobile and time-sensitive targets. A distributed mesh of small satellites is inherently more survivable than a handful of monolithic systems. Proliferated satellite constellations eliminate single points of failure and help to ensure more manageable degradation of capabilities in a contested environment. And because they are cheaper and faster to produce, proliferated satellites allow us to push new sensors

and capabilities to orbit on a continuous basis, keeping us ahead of adversary technology cycles.

QUESTION 26: Currently, large aerospace prime contractors dominate the contract landscape. This reliance on classic primes limits the flow of new ideas into the NRO acquisition cycle. If confirmed, what are your plans to allow "new" space entrants easier access to NRO contract vehicles?

If confirmed, I will prioritize expanding the NRO's diverse industrial base, which according to publicly available information, currently includes more than 250 prime vendors and 5,000 sub-contractors across multiple phenomenologies. Partnerships with industry and across the whole of government are driving leading-edge innovation, and I plan to continue utilizing flexible acquisition approaches that open contracting opportunities for startups and non-traditional suppliers.

The NRO's proliferated architecture is already benefitting from the ability of commercial startups to improve the cost, speed, and agility of NRO systems. By integrating these new entrants, the NRO can leverage state-of-the-art capabilities at significantly reduced costs and development times compared to traditional models. If confirmed, I will seek to ensure these flexible approaches become a standard feature of our acquisition processes, allowing the NRO to capture the best of commercial innovation to stay ahead of the threat.

QUESTION 27: What are your views concerning NRO's role as a research and development entity that supports prototyping and testing for the broader Intelligence Community?

The NRO does not just operate systems; it invents the capabilities that do not yet exist. By prototyping and testing high-risk, high-reward technologies, the NRO acts as a "pathfinder" for the broader IC, ensuring that proven innovations can be scaled across the enterprise. I believe the NRO is uniquely positioned to handle the high-end engineering challenges of the space domain. When the NRO prototypes a new ground architecture or a more resilient space vehicle, it isn't just solving a problem for itself; it is providing a blueprint for the entire IC.

If confirmed, I will ensure the NRO continues to take the "first step" on emerging technologies. By serving as the R&D lead for the most difficult space-based challenges, the NRO allows the rest of the IC to benefit from its discoveries, creating a more capable and integrated intelligence enterprise.

QUESTION 28: If confirmed, what additional steps would you pursue to improve intelligence collection and by what benchmarks should the success of future NRO collection efforts be judged?

If confirmed, I will improve intelligence collection by accelerating our transition to a proliferated and highly resilient architecture that leverages both commercial capabilities and our own exquisite systems. The success of future NRO collection efforts should no longer be judged simply by the number of satellites launched, but by the speed, persistence, and resilience of the intelligence delivered to the policymaker and the warfighter.

Space Force

The relationship between Space Force and the NRO is evolving as Space Force matures and takes on new missions.

QUESTION 29: What are your views of the respective responsibilities of the Space Force and NRO, and do you think those responsibilities are appropriately calibrated to each organization's strengths?

NRO's partnership with USSF is the cornerstone of American dominance in the space domain. The NRO focuses on overhead reconnaissance and intelligence collection; the USSF focuses on providing organized, trained, and equipped forces for space superiority and providing foundational space services to the joint warfighter.

The current alignment leverages the NRO's decades of experience in exquisite intelligence collection and the USSF's mandate to organize, train, and equip forces for a contested warfighting domain. In my view, these responsibilities are appropriately aligned to maximize mission success. The NRO's strength lies in its ability to push the boundaries of technology for intelligence collection, while the USSF's strength is in domain protection and warfighting integration.

If confirmed, I will remain committed to strengthening this partnership, ensuring that the NRO and USSF operate as a unified enterprise to maintain American dominance in space.

QUESTION 30: If confirmed, would you support moving NRO, either as a whole or in part, to the Space Force? Why or why not?

If confirmed, I would not support structurally moving the NRO, either in whole or in part, into the Space Force. The current construct provides the most agile and effective architecture for our national security.

Structurally absorbing the NRO into a military service could inadvertently disrupt its highly specialized capabilities and intelligence focus.

QUESTION 31: If confirmed, what do you see as some of the significant challenges to harmonizing and aligning how the NRO and the Space Force work together and take advantage of their respective missions and capabilities?

From my current position in industry, the NRO and the USSF appear remarkably well-harmonized and united in how they are each tackling the challenges of a contested space domain. If confirmed, my priority will be to evaluate this partnership and proactively address any integration challenges that may exist.

QUESTION 32: Where are the relative strengths of Space Force and the NRO, and what can each organization learn from the other?

I believe the NRO's primary strength lies in its agile acquisition culture and unparalleled ability to engineer exquisite intelligence collection systems, while the U.S. Space Force excels in domain protection, warfighter integration, and coalition building. By learning from one another, the NRO can become more tactically responsive to the joint force, and the Space Force can adopt faster, more innovative procurement practices. Ultimately, if confirmed, I will encourage this cross-pollination. The goal is not to make them identical or redundant, but to ensure they continually share best practices to create a more resilient and lethal national security space enterprise.

Congressional Intelligence Committees

QUESTION 33: What is your understanding of the Director of NRO's obligations to keep congressional intelligence committees fully and currently informed?

If confirmed, I commit to fulfill the responsibility to provide timely and accurate information to Congress and keep the congressional intelligence committees fully and currently informed in accordance with Title 50 United States Code § 3092 and Intelligence Community Directive 112.

QUESTION 34: Please assess, based on your observations and understanding of the relationship between NRO and Congress, how well NRO is working with Congress and, specifically, with the congressional intelligence committees.

a. What information should NRO share with Congress?

During my previous government service, I had opportunity to brief and testify before congressional intelligence committees. I believe that communicating with Congress is essential to maintaining trust with those who oversee national intelligence activities to ensure those activities remain consistent with laws and American values. If confirmed, I will fulfill my duties with transparency and regular communication with Congress at the appropriate level of classification.

b. What, if any, information should NRO withhold from the congressional intelligence committees? Why?

Given my understanding of the NRO and its mission, I am not aware of any information that should be withheld from the congressional intelligence committees unless it is considered pre-decisional or privileged within the Executive Branch. If confirmed, I will keep the committees fully and currently informed, consistent with Executive Branch guidance.

QUESTION 35: Please describe your view of NRO's obligation to respond to requests for information from Members of Congress.

The NRO has an obligation to respond to requests for information from the congressional intelligence and defense committees and Members of Congress at the appropriate level of classification. If confirmed as Director of the NRO, I would have the responsibility to keep committees fully and currently informed, and I would direct all NRO entities to promptly support requests for information.

QUESTION 36: Does NRO have a responsibility to correct the record, if it identifies occasions where inaccurate information has been provided to the congressional intelligence committees?

Yes.

National Security Threats and Challenges

QUESTION 37: What, in your view, are the current principal threats to national security that are most relevant to NRO?

The principal threat to the NRO is the transformation of space from a benign sanctuary into a highly contested warfighting domain. This shift is driven primarily by China and Russia, who are rapidly fielding a spectrum of kinetic and non-kinetic counter-space capabilities explicitly designed to blind, degrade, or destroy U.S. space-based intelligence architectures.

Today, our nation faces a full spectrum of threats designed to deny us that advantage. This includes pervasive non-kinetic, electromagnetic warfare, and co-orbital systems. Finally, because space capabilities are entirely dependent on terrestrial infrastructure, sophisticated cyberattacks targeting our ground stations, downlinks, and commercial supply chains represent critical threats that seek to sever the flow of intelligence without a single shot being fired.

QUESTION 38: In your opinion, how has NRO performed in adjusting its policies, resource allocations, planning, training, and programs to address these threats?

In my opinion, the NRO has performed exceptionally well in pivoting its enterprise to address the reality of a highly contested space domain. The most significant and effective adjustment has been its aggressive resource allocation toward a proliferated architecture. The NRO is rapidly moving away from a strict

reliance on a handful of exquisite, monolithic satellites to counter the growing threats of co-orbital systems and electronic warfare. By distributing its capabilities across a vast network of smaller systems and heavily integrating commercial partnerships, the NRO is making our intelligence architecture inherently more resilient, persistent, and exponentially harder for adversaries to blind or destroy. If confirmed, enterprise resilience, including space and ground components, will be a high priority for me.

NRO Management and Personnel

QUESTION 39: NRO's workforce includes NRO cadre, other IC employees, and personnel from the military and private industry. NRO's missions require highly skilled engineers, scientists, communications specialists, and acquisition managers.

a. What are your views of the current NRO culture and workforce?

Based on my experience working with elements and personnel from the NRO, I view the NRO workforce as highly competent and dedicated, with expertise in program management and science and technology disciplines.

b. What are your goals for NRO's culture and workforce, if confirmed?

The NRO workforce is the heartbeat of the organization, and I have witnessed its evolution over time. The new architecture and operating model are among the most promising and constructively disruptive the organization has experienced to date. Intentional leadership for this change is essential to reduce the complexity, drive execution, and position for the challenges of the future. If confirmed, I would focus on creating a high-performing, adaptive culture that rises to the opportunities created by the new architecture and operating model and technological revolution of this time.

c. If confirmed, what are the steps you plan to take to achieve these goals?

If confirmed, I will seek to create the conditions to recruit, develop, retain, and advance the world-class people that produce the

NRO's mission successes. I understand that attracting and retaining qualified employees for the NRO's highly technical mission may be a continuous challenge because many of those skills are highly sought after across government and industry. I would plan to represent the NRO at public events that continue to build awareness of and interest in the NRO as a place doing some of the most exciting and purpose-filled work a person could hope to be part of.

QUESTION 40: If confirmed, you would be the second political appointee to run NRO. Yet the Director of NRO must serve the nation with objective and dispassionate intelligence collection.

a. In what ways can the Director of NRO conduct its intelligence mission absent political considerations?

The NRO's intelligence mission is focused on obtaining and providing the information used to create intelligence. It is a highly technical mission. Programmatic decisions must be based on technical merit, always consistent with applicable laws and regulations. If confirmed, I will lead by example in ensuring that NRO follows legal and technical requirements.

b. If confirmed, how will you uphold this objective?

Throughout my career, leading with integrity must be beyond reproach. During my service as ADNI(SRA), I was responsible to delivering independent cost estimates for all major acquisitions and IC resource affordability analyses. For example, during budget sequestration, independent cost estimates became more visible as a potential means to mitigate budget reductions. SRA executed these analyses with tested principles and produced analytical products that decision makers could rely upon being disciplined, rigorous and evenhanded. The success of NRO's intelligence mission depends on accuracy and objectivity. This is true for building sensors that work as intended and successfully launching satellites into space, but objectivity is equally important in NRO's management of financial resources and compliance with all laws and policies that govern the intelligence community. If confirmed, I will ensure that the NRO executes its intelligence mission absent undue political influence.

QUESTION 41: How would you resolve a situation in which the assessments of NRO personnel are at odds with the policy aspirations of the administration.

If confirmed, it will be my responsibility to convey the assessment of the NRO and to resolve to the best of my ability any differences of position, always acting in compliance with applicable laws and policies

QUESTION 42: What principles should guide NRO in its use of contractors, rather than full-time government employees, to fulfill intelligence-related functions?

a. Are there functions within NRO that are particularly suited for the use of contractors?

It is my understanding that the NRO has a long history of using contractors to meet its requirements. The NRO leverages industry to manufacture and develop space assets, provide IT capabilities, develop ground systems, and operate and maintain systems. Furthermore, it is my understanding that the NRO relies on the use of specialized capabilities of contractors through System Engineering and Technical (SETA) services.

b. Are there some functions that should never be conducted by contractors, or for which use of contractors should be discouraged or require specific Director approval?

Based on my experience in both industry and government, certain activities are inherently governmental and cannot be delegated to contractors. These include functions that involve the exercise of sovereign authority or discretionary decision-making on behalf of the United States government. For example, roles such as program management or contracting officer responsibilities—which involve directing federal resources, making binding commitments, or overseeing federal personnel—should remain exclusively with government employees. For other sensitive functions, contractor involvement may be appropriate but should be subject to heightened oversight or explicit approval from the Director.

c. What consideration should NRO give to the cost of contractors versus government employees?

Based on my experience as ADNI(SRA), the cost of contractor support should continue to be reviewed and justified. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving briefings on the NRO's hiring and contracting practices, functions that are performed by contractors, and the ratio of government employees to contractors at the NRO, to inform my resource decisions.

d. What does NRO need to achieve an appropriate balance between government civilians, military personnel, and contractors?

In 2015, this committee supported the NRO's request to establish a cadre workforce. I understand that the current makeup of the workforce, shared across civilian and military personnel, provide benefits to the NRO. If confirmed, I look forward to receiving briefings on the NRO's hiring processes/practices and the workforce breakdown across cadre, military, and contractor positions.

QUESTION 43: If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that there are equal professional opportunities for all members of NRO workforce?

Throughout my career in industry and government, I used employee engagement and climate surveys as primary means to assess the relative state of the workforce and, more importantly, to focus on areas of improvement. While there are many questions in these surveys, I initially begin with three that I view as drivers of employee engagement:

- Is the strategic direction clear and does employee know how they fit into the strategy?;
- Does the employee have open communications with their leadership?;
- And can they see a career progression path?

Management's focus on career progression is the highest expression that they care about employees. In industry, I have done this by using career progression roadmaps that objectively show the skills, experience, and knowledge necessary to advance in each career field. Equally important is transparent decision making that are objectively tied to those criteria.

If confirmed, I want the NRO to be the employer of choice, drawing science, technology, engineering, and math talent from across academia, industry, military,

and government. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the NRO's Office of Human Resources to become fully informed of the processes in place to ensure fair hiring practices and career development opportunities.

Disclosures of Classified Information

QUESTION 44: If confirmed, how will you ensure that the NRO maintains and improves the security of classified information? Safeguarding our classified information and capabilities is a fundamental requirement for success.

If confirmed, I look forward to receiving briefings on the current protective measures in place at the NRO, and to explore additional opportunities to enhance security.

QUESTION 45: If confirmed, how would you manage, and what priority would you give to addressing, the following issues:

a. The vulnerability of NRO systems to harm or espionage by trusted insiders; and

If confirmed, I look forward to working within the NRO to ensure we are hiring the best people and assessing the systems in place to secure our network and environment from external and internal threats.

b. The vulnerability of NRO systems to outside penetration.

NRO systems must be hardened against intrusions. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the protective measures in place now and plans to expand existing cyber-security frameworks.

QUESTION 46: How do you think that individuals who intentionally or unintentionally mishandle classified information should be dealt with? Would you draw distinctions based on intent?

These kinds of issues need to be taken very seriously. If confirmed, to the extent that there is suspected malicious intent to mishandle classified information, I would anticipate referral to the Department of Justice for review and potential criminal prosecution; in the case of unintentional mishandling of classified

information, I expect the matter would be referred to NRO security for review and administrative action, as appropriate.

Questions from Senator Warner

QUESTION 47: NRO's architecture has changed over the twelve years since you have been away from government. What are some of the challenges you believe NRO faces in 2026 that it did not face when you left government in 2014?

The single, largest challenge is that space is now a contested domain. The United States exercises our right to free access and uninhibited operations in space despite these challenges. That drives a host of requirements NRO systems must account for. The NRO cannot afford to slow down, always pursuing technological and strategic advantages. Both challenges require the NRO to build stronger partnerships, in particular with the U.S. Space Force, and also to think outside the box of traditional IC stovepipes. Cross-cutting, tightly integrated, multi-intelligence systems and processes with our partners must evolve to meet these challenges.

QUESTION 48: Today's challenge is less about collecting data and more about processing it fast enough for it to be useful. Dr. Scolese has spoken about how AI is central to that effort, calling it "one of the most disruptive technologies the agency is adopting." How familiar are you with NRO's AI efforts? If confirmed as NRO Director, how prepared are you to take the helm of a rapidly transforming organization?

I am aware of NRO's intent to leverage AI as part of its shift to proliferated systems, and I wholeheartedly concur with Director Scolese that AI is a disruptive technology. I am also aware of the growing competition in industry for access to AI compute and the emergence of highly capable transformer models. I am not yet briefed on the specific applications NRO has for AI capabilities, but I am eager to learn and rapidly advance them. AI is poised to give the NRO a leap ahead of U.S. adversaries by leveraging the immense amount of data NRO will collect from its proliferated systems, fusing it intelligently, and providing more valuable sense-making capabilities.

QUESTION 49: As NRO Director, Dr Scolese has focused on the need for talent as NRO recovers from losses from workforce downsizing and requires new skills among its workforce as part of NRO's evolving mission. If confirmed as NRO Director, what would you do to retain the talent NRO has and attract the talent it needs for the future?

I believe that NRO's workforce is the "secret sauce" to its success, and I hold the retention, development, and attraction of new talent as a top priority. NRO's mission is incredible, including early research & development, implementation of that technology in programs of record, launching new capabilities into orbit, flying these satellites and gathering intelligence data, processing it side-saddle with warfighters and analysts, and delivering it globally to decision makers and allies. The uniqueness of NRO's mission is what attracts talent; however, I also understand that real life demands are present for every individual. If confirmed, I commit to using every policy lever available to me to support them, from things like STEM pay, an exciting internship program, fair and rewarding promotion, and career broadening opportunities.

QUESTION 50: Dr. Scolese has often told the Committee that NRO buys what it can and builds what it must. Do you agree that NRO should seek out commercial solutions first, before building bespoke government solutions?

The NRO should provide the most and best it can for the United States, wherever it comes from. The demand signal for space-based imagery and reconnaissance data from the DoW and the IC is insatiable and growing. Thus, the NRO has to look at all options available to meet those requirements. Commercial solutions are often cost effective and capable, but they cannot meet every intelligence need. The key is working with the analysts and warfighters, in partnership with other IC agencies like NGA, NSA, DIA, and others, to connect what commercial can provide to their mission requirements. This could mean new concepts of operations, tighter integration of commercial with NRO collection systems, and ease of access. In addition, commercially-collected intelligence has the unique benefit of being immediately sharable with all of our allies and partners, which is incredibly important in current and potential future conflicts.

QUESTION 51: The Committee has long supported a "unity of effort" between the NRO, Space Force, and U.S. Space Command that appropriately balances NRO's role in the acquisition of both national and military intelligence program (MIP) or service-funded space systems. What is your

view of NRO's evolving roles and responsibilities with regard to the proliferated constellation acquisition programs?

The NRO's National Intelligence Program is augmented by targeted investments from the Military Intelligence Program. Where it makes sense for the NRO to provide support to the military service-funded space systems, the NRO works with Executive Branch oversight to determine appropriate roles and responsibilities, including funding estimates and annual budget requests. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the current alignment.

QUESTION 52: Over the past few years, the NRO has launched more than 200 satellites, many of them as part of a proliferated architecture of smaller, less capable systems. Is there still a need for larger, more exquisite systems? Does the commercial sector have a larger role to play in an NRO architecture made up of smaller, less capable satellites?

While the NRO is expanding its proliferated architecture to improve resiliency and responsiveness, there remains a critical need for larger, exquisite systems that deliver capabilities smaller satellites cannot.

Commercial and small-satellite systems play an increasingly important role—particularly in augmenting coverage, increasing revisit rates, and offloading routine mission demands.

A hybrid architecture—combining large exquisite platforms with proliferated small satellites—provides the most robust, resilient, complementary, and comprehensive support to national security users.

QUESTION 53: Since 2018, NRO assumed the responsibility from NGA for acquiring commercial satellite imagery for the IC and DoD. NGA is responsible for acquiring value-added commercial analytic products and continues to be responsible for fulfilling the geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) requirements of the IC and DoD. Most would agree that NRO and NGA have had an uneasy relationship, particularly regarding commercial imagery acquisition. If confirmed as NRO Director, what steps would you take to improve the relationship with NGA with regard to commercial imagery acquisition? What would you do to ensure that commercial imagery contracts are aligned to NGA's validated GEOINT requirements?

One of my top priorities, if confirmed, would be to strengthen NRO's existing partnerships, including with NGA. If confirmed, I am eager to work with NGA's Director to identify existing gaps and work to resolve them. This partnership must also include the end users as part of the discussion to identify barriers that limit use of commercial imagery and ensure that validated requirements for GEOINT reflect industry capabilities and current needs. Finally, if confirmed, the NRO should pursue mechanisms to expand commercial partnerships across phenomonologies.

QUESTION 54: After your government service at the ODNI, you served on the boards of DigitalGlobe and Maxar (now Vantor) and Capella Space. What did you learn in these positions about the value of commercial imagery for the IC and DoD? What insights did you gain about how the government might take better advantage of these companies' capabilities?

My time serving on these company boards definitely underscored the value of commercial imagery for the IC and DoD.

These companies were all very different in their financial positions (e.g., publicly traded or venture capital funded), but all of them were driven by the desire to provide impactful data and services to the national security space mission. Despite producing smaller satellites at reduced costs, they all require capital investments where financial decisions benefit from stability in market demand. Uncertainty in government demand or instability in timing creates difficulties for investment decisions. Further, much of these companies' non-USG revenue is from international governments, and as such it is important for them to be able to compete against foreign companies to create a diversified portfolio. Prior decisions by the government to relax the imagery resolution restrictions when balanced with prudent national security controls is a good example of how the government can keep our domestic space industry competitive in the global markets. In terms of future potential, AI and down-stream analytics are areas that most of these companies are investing. The government is already working with them in this area and I believe there is even greater advantage as the capabilities mature and scale.

Questions from Senator Wyden

QUESTION 55: Do you agree that the U.S. government is overly dependent on a single company for launch capability? If yes, how would you propose to address this problem?

I see a period of active market expansion. National Security Space Launch (NSSL) Phase 3 Lane 1 already allows new entrants to compete for task orders under this more risk-tolerant mission profile. If confirmed, I will seek to expand our access to multiple launch providers by continuing NRO's deep partnership with the Space Force and Space Systems Command through the NSSL Phase 3 program and its future iterations.

QUESTION 56: Please confirm that NRO does not make collection decisions, but rather responds to taskings from NGA and NSA, which are responsible for legal as well as policy aspects of what is tasked for collection, with the caveat that the NRO requests tasking for purely RDT&E activities.

It is my understanding that NRO does not make collection decisions but rather responds to taskings from NGA and NSA.

QUESTION 57: Please confirm that NRO does not, nor is it authorized to evaluate, query, or analyze any data it collects for intelligence purposes, although it may use certain collected data for testing, calibration, operations, and maintenance of the satellite constellation and associated ground systems.

It is my understanding that NRO does not evaluate, query, or analyze data it collects for intelligence purposes.

QUESTION 58: Please confirm that NRO provides the unevaluated intelligence data it collects to NGA and NSA, and otherwise has no dissemination authorities.

It is my understanding NRO provides unevaluated intelligence data to NGA and NSA and otherwise has no dissemination authorities.

QUESTION 59: Please confirm that NRO's retention of unevaluated data is limited to the time necessary to transmit unevaluated data to NGA and NSA, which typically occurs within 45 days and would not exceed more than a couple months.

It is my understanding that this is the case.