SELECT COMMITTEE ON
INTELLIGENCE

UNITED STATES SENATE

Prehearing Questions
for
Joseph Weirsky
upon his nomination to be the Director of the
National Counterterrorism Center

Responsibilities of the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center

The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA) created the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and the position of Director of the NCTC.

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

ANSWER: The National Counterterrorism Center's (NCTC) role is as vital today as it was when Congress created it through the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA) in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. NCTC serves a distinctive integrating function within the Intelligence Community (IC). Its central responsibility is to analyze and integrate all of the U.S. Government's intelligence pertaining to terrorism and counterterrorism, except intelligence pertaining exclusively to domestic terrorism. Meeting this responsibility requires NCTC to draw on reporting and expertise from across agencies, identify connections and gaps, and provide integrated assessments to national leaders and counterterrorism partners.

NCTC also maintains the central repository of information on known and suspected terrorists and international terrorist groups, supports appropriate information sharing, and conducts strategic operational planning for counterterrorism activities across the U.S. Government. These functions are complementary: integrated analysis informs warning and policy; identity intelligence helps partners recognize threats; and planning helps agencies align their respective efforts.

NCTC does not replace the collection, investigative, military, or operational authorities of its partners. Its value lies in bringing their information and perspectives together, challenging assumptions, and ensuring decisionmakers and operators receive timely, objective, and actionable counterterrorism intelligence.

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

ANSWER: The Director of NCTC is responsible for leading the Center in carrying out its statutory missions and is the primary counterterrorism advisor to the Director of National Intelligence (DNI). Those responsibilities include overseeing the integration and analysis of terrorism information; ensuring NCTC maintains and

makes available information on known and suspected international terrorists; and supporting the President's national security objectives through whole-of-government strategic planning.

The Director must ensure NCTC produces independent, rigorous analysis for its many customers; identifies and communicates threats and intelligence gaps; protects information appropriately while promoting sharing; and works effectively with the departments and agencies that execute counterterrorism operations.

The Director must also set priorities, manage personnel and resources, sustain effective interagency relationships, and keep the DNI informed of counterterrorism developments.

QUESTION 3: Have you discussed with Director Clayton his specific expectations of you, if confirmed as Director of the NCTC, and his expectations of the NCTC as a whole? If so, please describe these expectations.

ANSWER: My engagement with Director Clayton has reinforced my understanding that he expects NCTC to continue executing its statutory mission with discipline, integrity, and a clear focus on providing timely, objective, and independent intelligence to the President, policymakers, and other customers. Director Clayton has expressed confidence in NCTC and expects it to sustain that performance and meet the Administration's counterterrorism priorities.

Meeting those expectations requires NCTC to effectively integrate intelligence and expertise from across the IC, identify critical intelligence gaps, maintain strong interagency partnerships, and exercise responsible stewardship of its personnel and resources. If confirmed, I would maintain open and transparent communication with Director Clayton, ensuring that he receives candid assessments of significant threats, intelligence gaps, resource considerations, and emerging challenges, including when those assessments are difficult.

NCTC Mission

QUESTION 4: What are NCTC's unique contributions to IC counterterrorism (CT) analysis as compared to CT analysis produced by other IC components such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)?

ANSWER: NCTC's unique analytic contribution is its enterprise-wide counterterrorism perspective, enabled by its unparalleled access to and integration of counterterrorism information. Whereas individual IC elements conduct analysis within their missions, collection authorities, geographic or functional expertise, and operational responsibilities, NCTC is non-operational and is specifically charged with integrating all international terrorism information from across the Government. NCTC analysts can connect reporting from multiple agencies and disciplines, examine threats that span geographic and organizational boundaries, and present decisionmakers and customers with a consolidated, coordinated assessment.

This integrating role is particularly important for strategic warning, cross-cutting threat assessments, identification of intelligence gaps, and analysis of terrorist networks, capabilities, intentions, and evolving tactics. NCTC also benefits from its relationships with federal partners outside of the IC that support counterterrorism identity intelligence, watchlisting, screening and vetting, and operational functions, which help NCTC analysts understand the implications of their assessments for the broader counterterrorism enterprise.

NCTC's mission is not to duplicate other agencies' analytic expertise. Strong analytic performance requires collaboration, appropriate division of labor, transparent sourcing, and willingness to incorporate alternative views. The objective is to make the collective work of the IC more useful than any single organization's production could be.

QUESTION 5: Do you believe NCTC is fulfilling its mission as outlined in IRTPA to serve as the primary organization in the U.S. Government for integrating and analyzing all intelligence pertaining to terrorism and CT?

ANSWER: Yes. NCTC continues to fulfill its central responsibility to integrate and analyze international terrorism information from across the U.S. Government. My experience in NCTC leadership has reinforced the importance of this mission and the value of drawing on information and expertise from multiple agencies. Fulfillment of that mission is an ongoing obligation, not a static achievement. If confirmed, I would continue to assess the timeliness and quality of integration, information sharing, and analytic warning, and work with our partners to address identified gaps.

QUESTION 6: What is your assessment of the NCTC's current strengths and

weaknesses? How do you plan to address those weaknesses, if confirmed?

ANSWER: NCTC's greatest strengths are its experienced workforce, its unique ability to integrate counterterrorism intelligence, and its relationships with counterterrorism partners. The Center brings together information, expertise, and perspectives that no single agency possesses, allowing it to identify emerging threats, provide strategic warning, and support coordinated counterterrorism efforts.

Like any organization operating in a constantly evolving threat environment, NCTC must continually adapt its workforce, technology, and processes to meet mission requirements. One particular challenge is balancing the urgency of daily counterterrorism activities with the need to invest in the Center's long-term effectiveness, including workforce development, technical modernization, and organizational resilience.

If confirmed, I would focus on maintaining that balance through clear priorities, disciplined resource management, investment in our people and systems, and close coordination with our interagency partners. My goal would be to ensure NCTC remains responsive to immediate threats while building the capabilities and institutional strength needed to meet future challenges.

QUESTION 7: What do you believe are the greatest challenges facing the NCTC? How do you plan to address those challenges, if confirmed?

ANSWER: One of the greatest challenges facing NCTC is adapting to dynamic terrorism threats while balancing national security priorities and finite resources. International terrorist threats can emerge rapidly, cross geographic and organizational boundaries, and exploit gaps in intelligence collection, analysis, and information sharing. NCTC must remain agile enough to recognize these developments and provide timely, objective assessments to policymakers and operational partners.

The Administration's emphasis on foreign terrorist threats in the Western Hemisphere illustrates the importance of this challenge. NCTC has adjusted its focus to address this priority, while maintaining its focus on enduring threats elsewhere and working with domestic and foreign partners to mitigate potential gaps.

If confirmed, I would implement disciplined prioritization, effective intelligence

integration, and regular reassessment of threats and resource requirements so NCTC can remain agile and responsive. I would work closely with the DNI and interagency partners to ensure NCTC's efforts remain aligned with the most significant threats while preserving the capabilities necessary to anticipate and respond to future challenges.

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

ANSWER: My vision is for NCTC to remain the U.S. Government's trusted center for integrated counterterrorism intelligence, providing timely, objective analysis and warning, reliable identity intelligence, and strategic planning that enables our partners to disrupt terrorist plots and protect Americans. Achieving that vision requires a talented workforce, clear mission priorities, and the tools and partnerships necessary to anticipate and respond to emerging terrorist threats.

In the near term, NCTC must meet the Administration's emphasis on foreign terrorist cartels and transnational gangs in the Western Hemisphere while maintaining focus on al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Iran and Iran-aligned terrorist groups. NCTC must also continue strengthening intelligence integration, information sharing, and its ability to deliver timely, actionable insights to policymakers and operational partners.

In five years, I expect NCTC to become an even more agile, innovative, and sustainable organization—one that invests in its people, modernizes its technology and processes, including by leveraging Super Intelligence, and aligns its resources to address the terrorist threats that matter most. My priorities of People, Mission, and Innovation are intended to guide that effort. Success will require an organization with the expertise, capabilities, and institutional resilience to anticipate challenges.

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

ANSWER: NCTC's performance should be assessed against clear mission objectives and meaningful measures of effectiveness. For intelligence integration and analysis, relevant measures include the timeliness, accuracy, and analytic rigor of assessments and warning; the ability to warn of emerging threats and intelligence

gaps; and the value of integrating reporting from across the IC. For terrorism identity intelligence, benchmarks should include data accuracy and completeness, timely processing of relevant information, and the reliability of information provided to screening and vetting partners. Across all mission areas, information sharing should be assessed by the timeliness, accessibility, and usefulness of information provided to partners, consistent with legal, privacy, civil liberties, and security requirements. For strategic operational planning, performance should be measured by NCTC's ability to identify interagency gaps, develop actionable plans, facilitate meaningful partner coordination, and track progress.

Supporting these mission outcomes requires a capable workforce and effective technology. Additional measures should assess the retention and development of critical expertise, alignment of personnel with mission priorities, and whether investments in technology and improved processes produce measurable gains in efficiency and mission effectiveness.

These benchmarks should be reviewed regularly, informed by feedback from policymakers and interagency partners, and adjusted as threats and priorities evolve. Ultimately, NCTC should be evaluated on the quality and utility of its contributions to the broader counterterrorism mission, recognizing that successful outcomes depend on the combined efforts of multiple agencies.

State and Local Governments

QUESTION 10: What is the role of the NCTC in producing and disseminating intelligence for state, local, and tribal partners?

ANSWER: NCTC has an important role in ensuring that international terrorism intelligence relevant to state, local, and tribal partners is integrated and shared through appropriate channels in a timely, useful, and appropriately protected form. Those partners may be uniquely positioned to recognize indicators of threats in their communities, and they benefit from federal intelligence that helps them understand foreign terrorist risks, tactics, and trends.

NCTC contributes its integrated counterterrorism perspective, working with and supporting the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and other partners to ensure that products are tailored to operational needs and disseminated consistent with applicable law, classification requirements,

and privacy and civil liberties protections. The objective is to provide meaningful context and warning informed by NCTC's decades of counterterrorism experience and drawing on its enterprise-wide view of the international terrorist threat.

Effective support also requires sustained partnerships. Appropriate and coordinated engagement with state, local, territorial, and tribal partners helps federal agencies understand what information is useful, what gaps remain, and how intelligence products can better support preparedness and threat recognition.

QUESTION 11: How is that role different than that of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)?

ANSWER: NCTC, FBI, and DHS have complementary but distinct responsibilities. NCTC contributes integrated, IC-coordinated counterterrorism intelligence to support FBI and DHS engagements. The FBI brings its intelligence and investigative authorities and established relationships with law enforcement partners at all levels. DHS brings its homeland security mission, domestic information-sharing responsibilities, and relationships with state, local, tribal, territorial, and private-sector stakeholders. NCTC works with FBI and DHS to avoid duplicative products and ensure partners receive consistent, actionable information through established channels. NCTC's role is to strengthen the collective picture, in support of the information sharing responsibilities of FBI, DHS, and other partners.

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

ANSWER: Cooperation among NCTC, FBI, and DHS is extensive and essential to the national counterterrorism mission. My experience in NCTC leadership has reinforced the importance of these established partnerships and the complementary capabilities each organization brings to identifying, assessing, and addressing international terrorist threats. Effective cooperation depends on timely information sharing, coordinated assessments, and a clear understanding of each organization's respective authorities and responsibilities. If confirmed, I would continue working closely with FBI and DHS leadership to strengthen information sharing, foster seamless coordination, and ensure our collective efforts provide timely and useful support to the broader counterterrorism mission.

Strategic Operational Planning

QUESTION 13: Please describe your assessment of the challenge presented by strategic operational planning and what should be done to improve NCTC's performance.

ANSWER: Strategic operational planning is one of NCTC's distinctive statutory responsibilities and one of its most demanding interagency functions. The central challenge is developing national-level plans that translate integrated intelligence and U.S. Government counterterrorism priorities into coordinated action across departments and agencies with different missions, authorities, and resources. NCTC is responsible for developing and coordinating these plans, but the responsibility for operational execution remains with the departments and agencies possessing the relevant authorities.

My experience in NCTC leadership has reinforced the importance of ensuring that strategic operational planning produces practical value rather than becoming an exercise in process. Effective planning requires early and sustained engagement with implementing agencies, clearly defined objectives, identification of interagency gaps and dependencies, and mechanisms to assess progress and address obstacles.

If confirmed, I would emphasize a focused set of consequential planning priorities, continue strengthening collaboration between NCTC's analytic and planning functions, and work with interagency partners to ensure plans remain relevant, actionable, and responsive to evolving threats. I would also seek regular feedback from implementing agencies to assess whether NCTC's planning efforts are improving coordination and supporting meaningful counterterrorism outcomes.

QUESTION 14: What is the role of the Director of the NCTC in developing the National Intelligence Priorities Framework (NIPF) regarding CT?

ANSWER: The National Intelligence Priorities Framework (NIPF) provides a mechanism for articulating and communicating national intelligence priorities. As the leader of the IC's integrating center for counterterrorism intelligence, the Director of NCTC provides the DNI and his priority-setting process with informed assessments of terrorism threats, collection and analytic gaps, and the implications of proposed counterterrorism priorities. That contribution draws on NCTC's

integrated threat picture and close consultation with IC and operational partners. NCTC identifies where priorities may not adequately reflect emerging threats or where resource and collection choices create consequential gaps. The President and DNI are responsible for NIPF decision-making.

QUESTION 15: If confirmed, will you ensure that the Committee is kept fully and currently informed of the activities, reports, and other actions taken by the Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning (DSOP)?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION 16: Do you believe DSOP is fulfilling its mission as outlined under IRTPA?

ANSWER: Yes. Based on my experience in NCTC leadership, the Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning (DSOP) is fulfilling its statutory mission by bringing departments and agencies together to develop strategic operational plans that support coordinated U.S. Government counterterrorism efforts. At the same time, fulfilling that responsibility requires continuous attention to the practical value of DSOP's work. Effective strategic operational planning must be informed by integrated intelligence, reflect meaningful participation from implementing agencies, identify gaps and dependencies, and support coordinated action within each department and agency's respective authorities. If confirmed, I would continue working with DSOP and our interagency partners to strengthen the relevance, effectiveness, and measurable impact of NCTC's strategic operational planning efforts.

National Intelligence Manager

QUESTION 17: What is your vision of the Director of the NCTC in the role of National Intelligence Manager for Counterterrorism?

ANSWER: The Director of NCTC should help the DNI integrate the counterterrorism enterprise by connecting threat assessments, collection and analytic requirements, partner capabilities, and resource considerations. This role requires sustained consultation with IC leaders and operational partners, clear objectives, and an ability to identify where integration is working and where changes are needed. The Director of NCTC should also use that perspective to identify gaps, reduce

unnecessary duplication, promote effective collaboration, and elevate significant issues that cannot be resolved at the working level. The objective is not to substitute NCTC's judgment for that of IC elements; rather, it is to help the DNI ensure that the community's counterterrorism efforts are coherent and responsive to evolving international terrorist threats.

QUESTION 18: What is the role of the Director of the NCTC in providing guidance regarding the allocation of CT resources among and within elements of the IC? Please also describe how the Director of the NCTC should identify unnecessary or less critical programs and seek to reallocate funding, within resource constraints.

ANSWER: The Director of NCTC plays an important role in advising the DNI on counterterrorism resource priorities across the IC. Drawing on NCTC's integrated understanding of terrorist threats, intelligence gaps, and interagency capabilities, the Director should help assess whether resources are aligned with the most significant threats and identify where adjustments could improve the effectiveness of the broader counterterrorism mission.

In my experience, sound resource decisions require more than identifying current priorities. They also require examining whether existing programs continue to address statutory requirements and validated mission needs, whether activities overlap unnecessarily, and whether resources devoted to lower-priority efforts could be redirected without creating unacceptable intelligence or operational gaps. I would approach these assessments in consultation with the relevant IC elements, considering the effectiveness of existing capabilities, the risks associated with reducing them, and the potential benefits of alternative investments.

If confirmed, I would provide the DNI with candid, evidence-based recommendations through established planning and budget processes. My responsibility would be to help inform resource decisions and illuminate their mission consequences, while respecting the budgetary and operational authorities of the DNI and other responsible officials.

QUESTION 19: What are the most important CT gaps or shortfalls across the IC?

ANSWER: Terrorism remains an adaptive threat, and the IC must continuously identify and address gaps in its counterterrorism capabilities. As the IC balances

enduring counterterrorism requirements with increasing demands from other national security priorities, it is important to ensure that resources and capabilities are aligned with the most significant threats and that unnecessary duplication does not divert resources from critical missions. Three enduring challenges are keeping pace with technological advances, effectively integrating and exploiting increasingly large volumes of intelligence data, and improving screening and vetting capabilities. Addressing these challenges requires sustained innovation, effective information sharing, and close coordination across the counterterrorism community.

National security priorities require careful consideration of how counterterrorism resources are allocated. If confirmed, I would work with the DNI and interagency partners to ensure that resource adjustments are informed by objective threat assessments, that potential intelligence gaps are identified and mitigated, and that we leverage foreign partnerships to help sustain counterterrorism awareness and capabilities where U.S. resources may be more selectively employed.

Congressional Oversight

QUESTION 20: What do you understand to be the obligation of the Director of the NCTC, in support of the Director of National Intelligence, to keep the congressional intelligence committees fully and currently informed about matters relating to compliance with the Constitution and laws? If confirmed, will you fulfill that obligation?

ANSWER: The Director of NCTC has an important responsibility, in support of the DNI, to ensure that the congressional intelligence committees are kept fully and currently informed of intelligence activities as required by the National Security Act of 1947. Effective oversight requires timely, candid, and responsive engagement. If confirmed, I would fulfill those obligations, including by providing testimony, briefings, and information. I view engagement with the intelligence oversight committees as an essential element of accountability and public trust.

Professional Experience

QUESTION 21: Please describe specifically how your experiences will enable you to serve as the Director of the NCTC.

ANSWER: I spent 26 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, the majority of that time during the Global War on Terror. Working in counterterrorism defined my career. Multiple combat deployments, first as a Recon Marine and later in specialized roles, shaped how I approach the problem. I began as an infantryman, then successfully completed the Reconnaissance Indoctrination and served nine years in Marine Recon. That period built a solid foundation in information gathering, reporting, maritime operations, and the execution of specialized raids—skills that became the base for everything that followed.

From 2004 until my retirement in 2020, while still serving in the Marine Corps, I served in the U.S. Special Operations Command as a special operator. My roles spanned the full spectrum of the counterterrorism mission: from small, specialized teams focused on intelligence collection and targeting to operating as a member of larger task forces conducting raids against high value targets. That range of experience gave me a practical understanding of how intelligence is developed, how it is turned into action, and how the two sides of the process must be tightly linked. I saw firsthand how incomplete information, pressure, and the need to protect both the force and the mission affect decisions at every level. Along with that role, I attended the Intelligence Community Operations course and implemented that training at the intersection of special operations and intelligence collection. Above all, this period reinforced that effective counterterrorism requires close partnership, as I managed relationships across the Department of War, the IC, and Law Enforcement. That exact collaborative approach defined my experience throughout the entirety of my career.

Working across different team sizes, mission sets, and partner organizations taught me that effective counterterrorism is rarely about a single dramatic action. It is about the continuous cycle of analysis and information sharing that enables finding, fixing, and finishing targets while managing risk, coordinating with partners, and adapting as the adversary changes tactics. The years in special operations refined my ability to operate in that environment by balancing the need for precise, actionable intelligence with the realities of conducting operations in complex and often ambiguous conditions. That combination of reconnaissance experience, intelligence collection, and direct-action work is what gives me a deep, practical understanding of counterterrorism.

After leaving active duty, I served as a Chief Operating Officer at a government contracting company supporting national security missions. In that role, I led the

organization with a clear focus on execution, built and directed high-performing teams, and instilled a strong culture of accountability and mission focus. The position also gave me intimate, hands-on experience managing budgets and workforce requirements, ensuring resources were aligned to operational priorities while maintaining the standards and discipline essential to supporting national security and related efforts. This executive experience complements my operational background by adding the organizational leadership and resource management skills needed to translate mission requirements into sustained results.

Serving in NCTC's senior leadership, including as Deputy Director and Acting Director, has brought those experiences together. Over the past year, I have seen firsthand the demands of integrating intelligence across the government, supporting informed counterterrorism decisions, and leading the Center in a complex threat environment. Those experiences have strengthened my understanding of NCTC's responsibilities and the importance of carrying them out effectively.

Staffing

QUESTION 22: NCTC operates a joint manning model with detailees from across the IC. Do you believe this model is still the best way to staff the Center, and what do you see as the advantages and challenges associated with this model?

ANSWER: Yes. I believe the joint manning model remains the best approach for staffing NCTC because it directly supports the Center's unique mission of integrating international terrorism information and expertise from across the U.S. Government. Having served as Deputy Director and Acting Director, I have seen firsthand the value of bringing together officers with different professional backgrounds, institutional perspectives, and specialized capabilities. Detailees strengthen NCTC's ability to integrate intelligence, understand the capabilities and requirements of partner agencies, and maintain the relationships necessary for effective interagency coordination. Equally important, Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) cadre officers provide NCTC with institutional continuity, sustained mission expertise, and organizational stability. The combination of these two elements is a particular strength of the Center.

The model also presents challenges. As partner agencies balance competing national security priorities, their ability to provide and sustain detailees may be constrained. Rotational assignments can create turnover, knowledge-transfer requirements, and

gaps in specialized expertise. These challenges require deliberate workforce planning and close engagement with IC partners.

If confirmed, I would work with partner agencies to sustain the joint manning model, strengthen workforce continuity, address critical skill gaps, and ensure detailees and cadre personnel are both positioned to contribute effectively to NCTC's mission.

QUESTION 23: 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: I believe NCTC's current organizational structure and joint workforce model provide a sound foundation for addressing current and emerging international terrorist threats. At the same time, an effective organizational structure must remain adaptable to emerging threats, changing national security priorities, and available resources. As the IC balances competing mission demands, NCTC must continue to align its workforce, specialized expertise, technology, and internal processes with its highest-priority responsibilities, while making disciplined and efficient use of the resources entrusted to it.

If confirmed, I would evaluate NCTC's organizational effectiveness, workforce capabilities, and resource alignment as the threat environment changes. I would work with the DNI and interagency partners to identify opportunities for greater efficiency, anticipate and respond to capability gaps that may emerge, and make targeted adjustments where warranted. My priority would be to preserve the strengths of NCTC's existing structure while ensuring the Center remains agile, effective, and prepared to meet future challenges.

Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act

Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) permits the government to conduct targeted surveillance of non-U.S. person agents of a foreign power (including terrorists) who are located outside the United States.

QUESTION 24: Please describe your understanding of the value of Section 702 as it relates to NCTC's mission.

a. Do you support reauthorization of FISA Title VII? Please provide the principal reasons for your support.

ANSWER: Yes, I fully support the reauthorization of Title VII of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) and urge Congress to do so as soon as possible.

Section 702 has been invaluable in the fight against terrorism. From the perspective of the counterterrorism community, it is a vital, irreplaceable collection tool. Section 702's agility, speed, and reliability provide the IC with insight on foreign terrorists and the threats they pose to the United States and U.S. interests. From NCTC's perspective, Section 702 enables NCTC to review known or suspected terrorist communications, conduct network development, and garner insight into terrorist operations. Over this past year, I have seen firsthand how critical this information is to NCTC's mission and the broader U.S. Government fight against terrorists who would do us harm. Losing this authority would severely degrade NCTC's ability to provide federal partners with timely intelligence leads to inform policymakers, prevent terrorist travel into the United States, and disrupt terrorist plots.

We see the real-world impact of this authority time and again in how it protects American lives. For example, the IC used Section 702 collection to identify multiple Central Asian individuals with ties to an overseas ISIS-linked travel network. This intelligence enabled more thorough screening and vetting of U.S.-bound travelers to help safeguard the Homeland. In addition, Section 702 helped the IC foil high-profile terrorist plots, including by assisting foreign law enforcement thwart a planned ISIS-inspired terrorist attack targeting a concert in Europe.

b. What reforms to the law, if any, do you believe are necessary?

ANSWER: Based on my experience at NCTC, I do not see a need for further legislative reforms to FISA Section 702. The authority is already tightly regulated, and the IC takes great care to abide by those rules to maintain public trust while protecting the Homeland from foreign

terrorists. If confirmed, I would focus on ensuring NCTC fully leverages the authority to protect the Homeland while strictly adhering to the statutorily required, court-approved procedures and maintaining its culture of compliance to safeguard the privacy and civil liberties of Americans.

Questions from Senator Warner

Workforce Protection

QUESTION 25: Will you commit that, if confirmed, you will seek to recruit, attract, and retain a workforce based on principles of fairness and merit, and without consideration of personal political preferences?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION 26: Do you commit to consider professional qualifications in personnel decisions exclusively, without consideration of partisan or political factors?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION 27: Would you ever consider an individual's personal political preferences (to include "loyalty" to the President) in making personnel decisions, such as to hire, fire, or promote an individual?

ANSWER: No.

QUESTION 28: If confirmed, what assurances will you provide to the NCTC workforce that personnel decisions will be based exclusively on professional qualifications, performance, and agency needs, and not on personal political preferences?

ANSWER: If confirmed, I would continue to make clear to the NCTC workforce that personnel decisions must be fair, lawful, and grounded in professional qualifications, performance, conduct, and mission requirements. Having served in NCTC leadership, I understand the Center's effectiveness depends on employees' confidence that their expertise and objective judgments are valued. I would continue

to reinforce those expectations through transparent processes, accountable management, and appropriate channels for raising concerns.

QUESTION 29: Will you impose a political litmus test for NCTC employees? Is a political litmus test ever appropriate in determining who can or should work in the IC?

ANSWER: No, and no.

Foreign Terrorist Organization Designations

QUESTION 30: What is your understanding of how President Trump's designation of cartels and other organizations as foreign terrorist organizations and specially designated global terrorists has altered the mission of the NCTC?

ANSWER: The designation of certain cartels and transnational gangs as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) or Specially Designated Global Terrorists has not altered NCTC's dedicated international counterterrorism mission. Rather, it has expanded the range of threats requiring NCTC's counterterrorism attention and reinforced the importance of integrating relevant intelligence across the U.S. Government. NCTC has adapted its efforts to address these requirements, including by incorporating FTO cartel and transnational gang information into the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE) and standing up the NCTC Interagency Fusion Cell (NIFC) as a counterterrorism intelligence resource focused on FTO cartels and transnational gangs, with particular focus on the Sinaloa Cartel and Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion.

Domestic Terrorism

QUESTION 31: The National Security Act, in describing the primary missions of NCTC, excludes "intelligence pertaining exclusively to domestic terrorists and domestic counterterrorism." The Act goes on to provide that NCTC may "receive intelligence pertaining exclusively to domestic counterterrorism from any Federal, State, or local government or other source necessary to fulfill its responsibilities and retain and disseminate such intelligence." How should NCTC interpret these provisions? What indicia of a transnational nexus should be sufficient for NCTC to deem a terrorist threat as part of its primary mission?

ANSWER: I understand those provisions ensure that NCTC has the accesses and authorities needed to fulfill its responsibilities and conduct its primary missions, which Congress clearly has signaled are focused on terrorist threats with a foreign or transnational nexus. For domestic terrorist threats with no foreign nexus, NCTC defers to the U.S. Government partners who have law enforcement missions that are postured to address those threats.

Foreign terrorists who are directing or plotting with individuals inside the United States should establish a sufficient nexus for NCTC involvement. When foreign terrorists are indirectly reaching into the Homeland to inspire or incite violent terrorist attacks, NCTC can also bring its insight into those foreign terrorist activities and intentions to bear, working with interagency partners. If confirmed, I would ensure NCTC's efforts are appropriately focused on its core mission.

QUESTION 32: In the absence of intelligence indicating a transnational nexus, what role should NCTC play in supporting law enforcement investigations into domestic terrorist threats?

ANSWER: As a part of its international terrorism mission, NCTC should, upon request of the FBI or other federal partner, support an investigation that may present a foreign nexus by identifying any relevant intelligence that establishes such a foreign nexus. In the absence of such a connection, NCTC should not play a role in domestic terrorism investigations.

QUESTION 33: What is your understanding of the differences, if any, between the terms "domestic terrorism," "domestic violent extremism," and "homegrown violent extremism"?

ANSWER: I understand "domestic terrorism" to have the meaning provided in 18 U.S.C. § 2331, which is terrorist acts that occur primarily within U.S. territorial jurisdiction. "Domestic violent extremism" is a descriptive term used in threat analysis to refer to the threats posed by domestic terrorists. "Homegrown violent extremism" refers to individuals who have lived in or operate primarily in the United States who advocate, engage in, or prepare to engage in terrorist acts in furtherance of FTOs while acting independently of direction by FTOs.

QUESTION 34: What agency or agencies of the federal government should be

engaged in countering the threat posed by domestic terrorists?

ANSWER: The FBI and Department of Justice are responsible for investigating and prosecuting domestic terrorism-related criminal activity. DHS also contributes through its homeland security responsibilities.

Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism (RMVE)

QUESTION 35: What is your view of the international and transnational threat posed by Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism (RMVE)?

ANSWER: Transnational racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism (RMVE) is a counterterrorism concern, particularly where individuals or networks operating across international boundaries facilitate attacks. The threat can manifest through the exchange of terrorist propaganda inciting violence, the development of international connections, and efforts to recruit or mobilize individuals to conduct attacks.

QUESTION 36: What is your view of the appropriate level of NCTC resource allocation toward the international and transnational RMVE threat?

ANSWER: NCTC's allocation of resources to transnational RMVE should be informed by objective intelligence assessments of the threat, including its intent, capabilities, and potential impact on U.S. persons and interests. NCTC should maintain capabilities to identify significant developments in the transnational RMVE threat, assess threats to the United States, and provide relevant intelligence to our interagency partners. The level of effort should remain responsive to changes in the threat environment. If confirmed, I would evaluate NCTC's resource allocation across the full spectrum of international terrorist threats, ensuring that our investments are proportionate to the intelligence-supported threat and aligned with national counterterrorism priorities.

Questions from Senator Wyden

Strategic Counterterrorism

QUESTION 37: In October 2018, President Trump issued the National Strategy for

Counterterrorism. It read:

> *"SUPPORT COUNTERTERRORISM CAPABILITIES OF KEY FOREIGN PARTNERS: We will continue to augment the capabilities of key foreign partners to conduct critical counterterrorism activities. We will help to professionalize the military, law enforcement, judicial, intelligence, and security services, as well as financial authorities, of key partners so that they are able to conduct counterterrorism operations effectively and justly. We will also work to ensure that partners meet their responsibilities in holding their citizens accountable for any acts of terrorism committed abroad. In addition, we will enhance the capabilities of key foreign partners to investigate and prosecute terrorism across borders through law enforcement cooperation, mutual legal assistance, and extradition."*

a. Do you agree that a national counterterrorism strategy requires supporting the capabilities of key partners? If yes, which countries do you see as the most important?

ANSWER: Yes. Effective counterterrorism requires strong partnerships with countries that possess the access, capabilities, and willingness to identify and disrupt terrorist threats. Cooperation with capable foreign partners extends the reach and effectiveness of U.S. counterterrorism efforts and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of threats to U.S. persons and interests.

The United States benefits from longstanding intelligence and counterterrorism cooperation with our Five Eyes partners—the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Partnerships with countries in the Middle East, Africa, and other regions directly affected by terrorist threats also remain important to understanding and addressing threats from ISIS, al-Qaeda, and their affiliates. Countering threats in the Western Hemisphere requires effective regional cooperation against FTO cartels and transnational gangs.

b. Which of these areas of U.S. assistance (military, law enforcement, judicial, intelligence, security services, and financial authorities) do you believe should be part of a national counterterrorism strategy? Please indicate for each which U.S. departments and agencies should

participate in that assistance.

ANSWER: All areas of U.S. counterterrorism assistance can support the execution of an effective national counterterrorism strategy. Consistent with the Administration's 2026 United States Counterterrorism Strategy, assistance should be prioritized based on the terrorist threat, U.S. national security interests, and the capabilities and needs of foreign partners. Applying assistance based on the specific threat environment and local conditions allow for a tailored approach that advances U.S. counterterrorism objectives and encourages greater responsibility among capable partners. The type of assistance and applicable authorities will determine which U.S. departments and agencies participate. NCTC is positioned to support its federal partners through integrated intelligence analysis and strategic operational planning, including convening interagency partners to help coordinate efforts.

c. What role should the FBI play in working with U.S. allies' and partners' law enforcement agencies to combat foreign and transnational terrorism? What FBI programs and capabilities do you believe should be prioritized?

ANSWER: The FBI plays an important role in helping foreign law-enforcement partners identify, investigate, and disrupt terrorism-related threats, while sharing relevant information with U.S. intelligence and law-enforcement partners. If confirmed, I would support the FBI prioritizing cooperation that improves the timely exchange of actionable threat information and strengthens partners' ability to detect threats to U.S. persons and interests.

QUESTION 38: The October 2018 National Strategy for Counterterrorism read:

"We will work with local stakeholders and civil society to mitigate the grievances that terrorists exploit. Internationally, where United States interests are at stake, we will seek and encourage locally driven solutions that target specific causes of terrorist radicalization and mobilization to violence. We will work with partners to encourage positive narratives that promote

tolerance and security."

a. Do you agree with this component of a national counterterrorism strategy? If yes, please describe the kinds of U.S. programs that you believe advance these goals and which U.S. departments and agencies you believe should carry them out.

ANSWER: Understanding the factors that contribute to terrorist recruitment and radicalization is an important component of an effective national counterterrorism strategy. Terrorist organizations exploit a range of local conditions, grievances, and vulnerabilities to recruit members, build support, and facilitate violence. Identifying and assessing these dynamics can help the United States better understand terrorist threats and inform decisions about how best to counter them.

The Administration's 2026 United States Counterterrorism Strategy emphasizes disrupting terrorist recruitment, financing, and operational capabilities, as well as countering terrorist propaganda. Efforts to address these threats should be informed by objective intelligence assessments and tailored to the specific organizations, environments, and activities involved. While various programs have sought to address conditions associated with terrorist recruitment and radicalization, their effectiveness should not be assumed. Such programs should be evaluated against clearly defined counterterrorism objectives, measurable outcomes, and the resources required to achieve them. Decisions concerning the development, funding, and implementation of counterterrorism-related assistance or prevention programs are the responsibility of the appropriate policy departments and agencies. If confirmed, I would ensure that NCTC continues to provide intelligence, analysis, and appropriate coordination that can inform these decisions.

b. USAID conducted both counterterrorism programs and development programs that address the causes of radicalization, undermine terrorist recruitment and promote the U.S. Government in regions prone to radicalization. Do you agree that USAID should play a role in strategic counterterrorism?

ANSWER: The Administration has fundamentally restructured U.S. foreign assistance to better align programs and resources with U.S. national security interests. While certain foreign assistance programs may contribute to broader counterterrorism objectives, their effectiveness in reducing terrorist recruitment or radicalization should not be assumed. Such programs should be evaluated based on demonstrated results, clearly defined objectives, and their contribution to addressing identifiable terrorist threats.

Watchlisting

QUESTION 39: During her confirmation process, former DNI Gabbard said:

"Ensuring fairness and protecting civil liberties in watchlisting programs is critical to maintaining public trust while safeguarding national security. To prevent misuse, I would advocate for clear, evidence-based criteria for watchlisting American citizens, robust oversight mechanisms, and regular audits to ensure no one is listed based on First Amendment-protected activities like free speech or political affiliation. Additionally, I would work to enhance the redress process by 98 improving the Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (TRIP) to ensure timely and transparent resolution of complaints and exploring independent review panels to provide impartial oversight and due process."

a. Do you agree with former Director Gabbard's views? If yes, please describe how you would promote oversight and audits of watchlisting programs, as well as how you would improve the redress process.

ANSWER: Yes, I agree with former Director Gabbard's statement. Effective terrorist watchlisting is an essential component of our national counterterrorism efforts, but its effectiveness depends on the accuracy, reliability, and appropriate use of the underlying information. I believe that rigorous standards, appropriate oversight, and protections for privacy and civil liberties are fundamental to maintaining the integrity of the watchlisting process and public confidence in its administration.

NCTC should continue to apply established standards for terrorist

identity information, maintain appropriate quality-control and review procedures, and work closely with nominating agencies and the FBI's Threat Screening Center to promote the accuracy and reliability of information used for watchlisting. With respect to redress, I recognize the importance of providing individuals with appropriate mechanisms to address potential errors or misidentification. NCTC should continue to support DHS and the FBI by reviewing and correcting relevant terrorist identity information when warranted. If confirmed, I would work with the DNI and interagency partners to ensure NCTC fulfills its responsibilities in a manner that protects national security while respecting the privacy and civil liberties of Americans.

QUESTION 40: Should U.S. persons or persons in the United States who are not known or suspected terrorists be included in the Terrorist Identities Data Environment (TIDE)? If so, what standards and guidelines should apply?

ANSWER: Yes, consistent with the statutory definition of terrorism information under the IRTPA, TIDE should include U.S. persons and persons in the United States who have a clear nexus to international terrorism, including those who are known associates of international terrorists. To fulfill its statutory mission of serving as the central and shared knowledge bank on known and suspected international terrorists, NCTC must ensure TIDE remains effective, accurate, and responsive to mission requirements while protecting the privacy and civil liberties of U.S. persons. If confirmed, I would assess the applicable policies, procedures, and compliance mechanisms, in coordination with mission, legal, and privacy and civil liberties officials. My priority would be to support improvements that enhance mission performance, preserve the accuracy and reliability of terrorist identity information, and enhance protections for privacy and civil liberties.

QUESTION 41: Do you believe TIDE should be expanded in light of the designation of cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations? (FTOs). If yes, do you believe all members of the designated cartels should be included in TIDE and, if so, how would you establish membership? Do you believe people suspected of one-time cooperation or people coerced into cooperation should be included?

ANSWER: Yes, FTO cartels and transnational gangs pose a national security threat. As with other FTOs, their members and associates should be included in TIDE.

NCTC and federal nominating partners already have taken significant steps to include relevant information in TIDE and will continue to update it with accurate information on individuals with a nexus to international terrorism. TIDE nominations require an objective assessment of available information that considers mitigating factors, such as coercion, and are evaluated against established standards.

QUESTION 42: Do you believe people who are neither members of nor have an operational connection to the cartels, but are associates of those people should be included in TIDE? Should that include U.S. persons?

ANSWER: Yes, as noted above, TIDE serves as the central and shared knowledge bank on known and suspected terrorists and international terror groups, including their networks of contacts and support. The known associates of FTO cartel and transnational gang members, including U.S. persons, should be included in TIDE, as appropriate and in line with established interagency standards and TIDE policies, to disrupt terrorist support structures.

QUESTION 43: What level of membership, operational connection, or indirect association with a cartel do you believe warrants watchlisting, secondary screening, or no-fly status?

ANSWER: With regard to TIDE membership, operational connections, and associations for individuals, NCTC applies the same criteria to FTO cartels as it applies to other FTOs. The FBI, including the Threat Screening Center, and DHS are responsible for maintaining the watchlist, secondary screening, and the No Fly List. My understanding is that they apply consistent criteria across FTOs.

QUESTION 44: Do you believe NCTC needs more resources in response to the designation of cartels as FTOs? If yes, what terrorist threats would you deprioritize as you shift resources to this new mission?

ANSWER: NCTC largely has accommodated the additional requirements associated with the designation of cartels and transnational gangs as FTOs through the prioritization of existing resources and capabilities. NCTC continues to work with its interagency partners to ensure that the Center has access to the expertise and capabilities necessary to support these mission efforts. I believe NCTC must remain disciplined in how it allocates resources across its counterterrorism responsibilities.

The increased emphasis on terrorist threats in the Western Hemisphere requires adjustments to priorities and the distribution of effort, but those decisions must be informed by objective threat assessments and an understanding of the risks associated with reduced coverage elsewhere. If confirmed, I would work with the DNI and interagency partners to evaluate mission requirements, maximize the effectiveness of existing resources, and leverage the joint workforce model to meet emerging needs.

Department of Homeland Security

QUESTION 45: Should NCTC receive from elements of the Department of Homeland Security information on U.S. persons that is not linked to a foreign terrorist organization or bulk data that includes information on U.S. persons not linked to a foreign terrorist organization? If yes, what kind of information should that include, and from what element of DHS? What limits, if any, should apply to the receipt of this information?

ANSWER: NCTC does and should receive data from information sharing partners, including DHS elements, in support of its statutory mission to integrate and analyze the U.S. Government's international terrorism information. DHS data is particularly valuable for NCTC's mission. DHS shares information with NCTC regarding travel and immigration benefits and certain law enforcement data related to international terrorist groups. Such data may be described as "bulk" or unevaluated data and may include U.S. person information.

NCTC's collection, handling, and use of this data is governed by any agreements with NCTC's information sharing partners, ODNI's Executive Order 12333 U.S. Person procedures approved by the Attorney General, and NCTC's Implementation Procedures for the same. NCTC works with partners to identify appropriate data for sharing by first determining that the collection will relate to an NCTC authority or responsibility and that the dataset involved constitutes or may contain international terrorism information. NCTC evaluates the data and only retains international terrorism information. Data that does not qualify for retention is purged from NCTC's holdings at the end of an evaluation period that depends on the volume, proportion, and sensitivity of the U.S. person information involved. The same procedures also apply dissemination controls, particularly with regard to the dissemination of U.S. person information.

Homeland Security Task Forces

QUESTION 46: The January 20, 2025, Executive Order ("Protecting the American People Against Invasion") directs that Homeland Security Task Forces (HSTFs) be established in every state and that they "shall include representation from any other Federal agencies with law enforcement officers, or agencies with the ability to provide logistics, intelligence, and operational support to the HSTFs." What role, in any, do you believe NCTC should play in the HSTFs?

ANSWER: NCTC supports the Homeland Security Task Forces (HSTFs) by serving as a national-level counterterrorism intelligence resource focused directly on FTO connections, including FTO cartels and transnational gangs. NCTC does this work through the NIFC, which includes assignees from federal law enforcement partners who understand their home agencies' information and requirements. NCTC serves a foreign intelligence mission role, as it does across its international counterterrorism functions. The NIFC leverages NCTC strategic analysis to identifying terrorist networks and vulnerabilities for federal law enforcement to investigate. NCTC is uniquely positioned to support the HSTFs on this subset of their work as a result of NCTC's access to information on FTOs from across the IC and U.S. Government, including federal law enforcement. NCTC is able to provide analytic support to federal law enforcement on these FTOs that no other agency is able to provide. Moreover, NCTC is able to leverage its partner relationships to broaden interagency collaboration and facilitate the sharing of information on FTO cartels and transnational gangs while ensuring protection of U.S. persons information consistent with the procedures described above.

QUESTION 47: In December 2025, then-NCTC Director Joe Kent testified that the NCTC Intelligence Fusion Center (NIFC)'s "main goals" are sharing information among law enforcement agencies and the Intelligence Community (IC) on FTO-designated cartels and gangs, to include identifying, vetting, and providing "an intelligence driven prioritization of high-impact targets" and providing "new operational leads for law enforcement as discovered via correlated data analysis."

a. Do you agree with this level of involvement by NCTC in domestic law enforcement?

ANSWER: I agree the NIFC serves an important foreign intelligence function

within NCTC to support the disruption of FTO cartels and transnational gangs and help protect Americans. The NIFC leverages NCTC's more than two decades of experience handling and analyzing information related to FTOs to integrate federal law enforcement and intelligence data into assessments that provide intelligence support to U.S. Government partners focused on dismantling these deadly groups that threaten Americans' lives. These assessments run the gamut from tactical-level leads that support investigations into members of these groups to strategic-level analysis that offer insights and potential opportunities for U.S. policymakers seeking to craft more effective strategies to address FTOs that threaten the United States and U.S. interests abroad.

b. What limits, if any, do you believe elements of the Intelligence Community should adhere to with regard to domestic law enforcement?

ANSWER: NCTC, including the NIFC, is not involved in supporting domestic law enforcement efforts without a foreign nexus. I do not believe that would be an appropriate role for the IC generally.

c. What role, if any, does the NIFC play in conveying intelligence and information, including on U.S. persons, between other elements of the Intelligence Community and local law enforcement

ANSWER: As described above, the NIFC supports the HSTFs and federal law enforcement. The NIFC does not provide analytic support to local law enforcement, either on behalf of NCTC or other IC elements.

Domestic terrorism

QUESTION 48: In a September 22, 2025, Executive Order, Donald Trump purported to designate "Antifa" as a "domestic terrorist organization." Do you agree that there is no basis in law, either statutory or constitutional, for designating "domestic terrorist organizations"?

ANSWER: Although I am not a legal expert, I agree there is no statutory concept of a "domestic terrorist organization." I defer to the legal experts regarding the President's constitutional authority to issue that Executive Order. That said, it is my

understanding that the Executive Order directed all relevant departments and agencies to implement it using applicable authorities to address the threat described.

QUESTION 49: On September 25, 2026, Donald Trump issued Presidential Memorandum NSPM-7 ("Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence"). What role, if any, should NCTC play in implementing or supporting NSPM-7?

ANSWER: National Security Presidential Memorandum 7 (NSPM-7) was not addressed to, and did not identify actions for, NCTC. NCTC does not have law enforcement or investigatory functions and has not played a role in implementing or supporting NSPM-7 activities. As noted above, if a domestic law enforcement agency such as the FBI seeks NCTC support regarding a domestic terrorism investigation, such as a political assassination, NCTC's role is to identify any connections to international terrorism. In the absence of a foreign nexus, NCTC should play no further role.

QUESTION 50: In November 2025, the Department of State designated "Antifa Ost, along with three other violent Antifa groups" as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). The Secretary of State's announcement stated that the designation "supports President Trump's National Security Presidential Memorandum-7," which is titled "Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence." Please describe your understanding of how the foreign "Antifa" designation "supports" domestic terrorist investigations. Do you believe that the intelligence tools, programs and authorities available to the government in the international counterterrorism context can be used against suspected domestic terrorists?

ANSWER: I agree with Director Clayton that domestic terrorism is a domestic law enforcement concern, not a foreign intelligence matter. Foreign anarchist terrorist groups, such as the primarily Germany-based FTO Antifa Ost, are typically motivated by antifascist and anticapitalist ideology and engage in violence against individuals whom members perceive as "fascist" or promoting neo-Nazi beliefs. When foreign terrorist groups direct, enable, or inspire ideologically motivated violent attacks in Homeland by domestic terrorists who identify as Antifa, mitigating those foreign terrorist threats would support the objectives of NSPM-7. No, I do not believe the foreign intelligence apparatus developed to address international terrorism can be used against suspected domestic terrorists.